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**WILL NEGOTIATIONS
BRING PEACE
TO SOUTH AFRICA?**



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Front Cover: The African National Congress delegation that took part in the Cape Town talks with President F.W. de Klerk on May 2 to 4. *Left to right, front row* – Ruth Mompati, Alfred Nzo, Nelson Mandela, Joe Slovo, Walter Sisulu, Cheryl Carolus. *Back Row* – Archie Gumede, Ahmed Kathrada, Joe Modise, Beyers Naude, Thabo Mbeki.



PROSPECTS FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT

THE SPECTACLE OF A government delegation headed by President De Klerk sitting down last May to formal 'talks about talks' with an ANC delegation headed by Deputy President Nelson Mandela not surprisingly caused a sensation in South Africa amongst all sections of the population. Truly, nothing like this had ever been seen before. At the time of the whites-only elections in September last year De Klerk had assured the electorate that he would never negotiate with the ANC until it renounced violence, yet here he was entering into discussions with an ANC delegation whose leader had declared repeatedly since leaving prison on February 11 that the option of armed struggle must be retained.

Likewise last year Minister of Information Stoffel van der Merwe had declared that the Nationalist Party's negotiations strategy was designed "consciously to marginalise the ANC". Yet the May 2 to 4 palaver at Groote Schuur, far from marginalising the ANC, brought it decisively to centre stage.

Whatever the apartheid rhetoric about the ANC being merely "one of the many political organisations in South Africa", at Groote Schuur it was the ANC that met with the government as an equal in an attempt to create conditions and structures which, it is hoped, will for the first time in South African history lead to the resolution of the country's political problems.

If the expectations created by the May meeting are realised, no longer will the political administration of South Africa be the exclusive business of a white-dominated parliament. No longer will the country's constitution, as was the case in 1910 and 1961, be determined by the aspirations of a privileged minority of the population.

The Groote Schuur agreement is not just one of those accords the apartheid regime has signed with puppets and bantustan leaders. This is an agreement with the leaders of a revolutionary movement whose declared objective is to restructure the country on non-racial and democratic lines. This development signals the beginning of the end of the apartheid system.

It may, indeed, be said that the Cape Town meeting is a recognition of the fact that dual power has emerged in South Africa. The regime controls the civil service and the security apparatus, but the ANC controls the streets. A possible outcome is the eventual development of an interim government, initially as a joint project of the ANC and the regime, but ultimately as a people's government voted into power by the democratic majority.

Of course that stage has not been reached yet, nor has the regime committed itself to it. The May talks were purely talks about talks, a discussion of the obstacles which had to be removed before negotiations about a future order in South Africa could begin. But it is clear that in the face of the various pressures which have been generated in South Africa and abroad in the recent period, it is the regime which is in danger of being marginalised, not the ANC.

From the ultra-left has come the allegation that merely by talking to the regime the ANC has "sold out" and is already well down the road of collaboration and ultimate capitulation. This is the rhetoric of the impotent, who draw up blueprints for the future without having the benefit either of intelligent research or of organised mass support.

In fact, the ANC has achieved its present position of eminence and leadership in the liberation movement through consistent adherence to principle and its refusal to compromise on basic issues. It has remained faithful to the Programme of Action, the Freedom Charter and its various declarations of strategy and tactics despite every form of repression and destabilisation directed against it by the regime. Its cadres have survived the ferocious assaults of gaolers and mercenaries; their very steadfastness and determination have impressed and, in many cases, converted their enemies.

By contrast, the apostles of apartheid have been forced to abandon one ideological position after another and have come to the point where nobody knows the direction in which they are travelling. Whereas in 1948, when they came to power, the Nationalist Party stood unashamedly for a policy of apartheid in terms of which the white man would remain the *baas* for ever, today President De Klerk proclaims a policy of universal suffrage. In his British television interview with Brian Walden on April 22 he said: "White domination in as much as it exists must go". A few days later, on May 15, Minister of Development Aid, Stoffel van der Merwe, formally consigned the bantustan policy to the dustbin, telling parliament that the government had given up trying to turn the six "self-governing" homelands into independent countries. Independence was no longer considered a worthwhile option, he said, and the territories' constitutional future was a matter for negotiation.

When De Klerk speaks of universal suffrage he does not mean majority rule which, he told Walden, "is not the right model for a heterogeneous society". Nevertheless, even on this front the Nationalist Party has shifted its ground. When the Natal Indaba proposals were first mooted in 1986, providing for a two-chamber legislature, one elected by the population as a whole on a system of proportional representation and the other providing for group representation with the power of veto, the whole scheme was rejected out of hand by the Nationalist government. But in his Walden interview De Klerk, without mentioning the words "Natal Indaba", hinted that such a two-chamber legislature was now one of the models under consideration by the regime. "You could build in the security in one house and you can build in the equal

representation in another house", he said. The principle of consensus (veto) would give the minority groups the security they needed.

While the regime's uncertainty and indecision can be contrasted with the firmness and clarity of purpose of the liberation movement, they are at the same time a cause for concern. It is difficult to negotiate with those whose words differ from their deeds. It is also not easy to determine for whom De Klerk can claim to speak today. He won a whites-only election last September on a platform which did not include talks with the ANC or any form of majority rule, and yet he lost votes and seats to parties of both the left and right in the parliamentary spectrum. The five-year plan of constitutional reform which he had placed before the country was so vague and imprecise as to be incomprehensible.

When the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948 it claimed to have unified and to represent Afrikaner nationhood, an entity of which it does not even speak today, though the Cabinet is overwhelmingly Afrikaans-speaking. On whom then could De Klerk rely to support any proposals which might emerge from the negotiations which are intended to follow on the present discussions with the ANC? The business community, yes; the majority of English-speaking whites, maybe. But many observers feel that public opinion in so far as the whites are concerned has shifted significantly to the right in recent months and that the Nationalist Party might well lose a whites-only election at this stage.

But this is precisely the significance of the talks which De Klerk is holding with the ANC — that he is seeking a power-base which is broader than the one on which he was brought to office. Whatever authority he has rests on the votes of the 1 million whites who voted Nationalist in the September election — 1 million out of a total population of close on 40 million. Power which rests on such a narrow base can only be propped up with guns, and history has proved conclusively that in the long run force is no substitute for popular consent. In fact it is the regime's almost exclusive reliance on force in the past which has brought it to its present state of crisis.

ACCOUNTABILITY

When De Klerk set out on his road of "reform" he might have had hopes of neutralising the influence of the ANC by making it only one of a number of voices to be heard round the negotiating table.

In particular he thought that by pushing Buthelezi and other bantustan leaders to the fore he could create the impression that the ANC spoke only for a radical minority and its voice could be drowned out by the clamour of the conservative majority. The political upsurge and the enormous rallies which have greeted the release of Mandela, Sisulu and the other imprisoned leaders, coupled with the total collapse of his bantustan strategy, have convinced him otherwise. The communique which was issued after the May 2-4 discussions stated: "It is understood that the South African government in its discretion may consult other political parties and movements and other relevant bodies", but De Klerk knows today that unless he can reach agreement with the ANC he and his party are doomed. The Humpty-Dumpty of white power can never be put together again.

In the document he submitted from prison last year to the former state president P.W. Botha opening up the prospect of negotiations, Nelson Mandela said:

"I believe that the overwhelming majority of South Africans, black and white, hope to see the ANC and the government working closely together to lay the foundations for a new era in our country, in which racial discrimination and prejudice, coercion and confrontation, death and destruction will be forgotten".

The discussions that opened on May 2 have brought that prospect nearer, but there remain many problems which must be addressed. If De Klerk is to convince the world of his sincerity, he needs to take action to carry his own party and the white community as a whole with him over the border of fear and prejudice, and to put down without hesitation the attempts of the right-wing reactionaries to destabilise the political situation. Bearing in mind the considerable presence and influence of reactionary forces in the civil service, the police and the military, he must consolidate his political strength so as to be in a position to ensure that what is decided at the conference table can be implemented by his administration.

For its part the ANC must as speedily as possible convert the enormous prestige and authority it enjoys into functioning structures on the ground, capable of mobilising its millions of supporters for effective political action. In a speech to the Cape

Town Press Club on May 3, while the discussions with De Klerk were still in progress, the head of the ANC's International Department Thabo Mbeki rejected the notion that the ANC regarded itself as the "sole and authentic representative of the majority of South Africans". He said:

"The ANC recognises that many others are involved in the struggle against apartheid and should be involved in the process of reshaping the country. We would hope that many white people want to sit on our side".

Steps to bring together a united front of all forces willing to work together to put an end to apartheid and set South Africa firmly on the road to democracy are now a matter of the utmost urgency. The old centre of gravity in South African politics based on white supremacy has gone, but in the process of transition to a new South Africa we have entered a period of great instability as the various contending forces struggle for mastery.

ON COMPROMISE

South Africa is already on fire from end to end. The horrifying catalogue of assaults and killings must be brought to an end if we are not to sink into a state of self-perpetuating violence in which all our hopes of reform and social progress will be destroyed. Certainly there are dangers in the present process, but the alternatives are even more horrifying. And to those who cry "sell-out" and "treason", let us recall the words of Lenin in 1917:

"The term compromise in politics implies the surrender of certain demands, the renunciation of part of one's demands, by agreement with another party. The usual idea the man in the street has about the Bolsheviks, an idea encouraged by a press which slanders them, is that the Bolsheviks will never agree to a compromise with anybody.

"The idea is flattering to us as the party of the revolutionary proletariat, for it proves that even our enemies are compelled to admit our loyalty to the fundamental principles of socialism and revolution. Nevertheless, we must say that this idea is wrong. Engels was right when, in his criticism of the Manifesto of the Blanquist Communists (1873), he ridiculed their declaration: 'No compromises! This', he said, was an empty phrase, for compromises are often unavoidably forced upon a fighting party by circumstances, and it is absurd to refuse once and for all to accept 'payments on account'.

"The task of a truly revolutionary party is not to declare that it is impossible to renounce all compromises, but to be able, *through all compromises*, when they are unavoidable, to remain true to its principles, to its class, to its revolutionary purpose, to its task of paving the way for revolution and educating the mass of the people for victory in the revolution". (*Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p.305).

To enter into discussions with the government does not in itself constitute a compromise, but compromise of one sort or another may eventually be forced upon us by circumstances. The test will be whether that compromise opens the way to the ultimate achievement of our objectives, and whether the alternative to compromise would constitute a setback for the revolutionary cause. These matters must not be decided by rhetoric but by careful analysis of the objective situation which prevails at the decisive moment.

The discussions which began on May 2 open up the prospect that ultimately institutions can be created through which all sections of the population can work on the basis of full equality for the achievement of their political and social ambitions. This in itself does not amount to liberation, but would undoubtedly facilitate the advancement of the liberatory process.

The only guarantee that compromise does not lead on to surrender, even if unwitting, lies in the state of vigilance of the revolutionary masses and in particular of the organised working class, which must insist not only on being informed at all stages of what is going on, but on being involved in the negotiating process itself to the fullest extent possible, so that whatever agreement emerges reflects their wishes and carries their full endorsement. The principles of collectivity, responsibility and accountability are as vital at the bargaining table as in any other field of struggle. The process of mass consultation which produced the Freedom Charter in 1955 and gave it its unique authority must now be initiated on a more extensive scale if the constitution which emerges at the end of the day is to secure the support of the people.

Above all, it must be appreciated that the discussions which have been opened between De Klerk and the ANC are not a replacement of or substitute for mass struggle against the evil system of apartheid. All De Klerk's reforms to date, though not insignificant, leave the main pillars of apartheid power intact, and

the liberation movement cannot cease its efforts on all fronts until an effective transfer of power to the people has been brought about. The talks may have opened up tremendous possibilities for democratic advance, but whether these possibilities are realised or not depends on the maintenance and intensification of every form of pressure by the liberation movement at home and its allies abroad. In particular at the present juncture every effort must be made to counter De Klerk's campaign to procure the lifting of international sanctions against South Africa, which has been a major factor in bringing him to the bargaining table.

Our suffering people are crying out for relief from the torment of apartheid repression. This is not the time to wind down but to intensify our crusade for freedom until final victory is achieved.

A luta continua!

SACP AND COSATU **GET TOGETHER**

A MEETING OF GREAT HISTORICAL importance of members of the South African Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Unions was held in Harare from March 29 – 31. The 28-person SACP delegation was led by the General Secretary Joe Slovo and the 31 COSATU delegates were led by Vice-President Chris Dlamini.

The significance of the meeting must be understood in terms of the political context in which it took place: firstly, an internal situation in which the De Klerk regime has been compelled to move towards negotiations by unbanning the ANC, the SACP and other organisations. In so doing it has opened up the political space in which the masses can be mobilised and organised to erect structures of dual power, defeat the apartheid regime and begin the process of economic redistribution and democratic reconstruction.

Secondly, the crisis in Eastern Europe and the USSR, while creating favourable conditions for capital to launch an ideological attack on socialism, has reinforced the need for the working class to develop new conceptions of democratic socialism.

Under these conditions the role of the principal formations of the working class, the SACP and COSATU, in advancing the national liberation struggle under the leadership of the ANC, and in influencing that struggle in a socialist direction, has taken on a particular strategic importance. It was these goals and the specific tasks of, and relationship between, the two organisations which dominated the discussion of the different items on the agenda.

In order to set the background for the discussion of the policies and work of both organisations in the contemporary situation, the meeting began with a presentation by the SACP of the Party's history which, due to its illegal status over the past 40 years, is not well-known. Noting that it was the first and, for many decades, the only non-racial party in South Africa, the presentation focused on the organisation's contribution to the Marxist-Leninist theory and practice of class and national struggles and of the building of the mass and trade union movements. Other comrades emphasised the Party's internationalism and its pioneering role in bringing to, and spreading Marxist ideas in, South Africa. Close attention was also paid to certain mistakes and weaknesses in the party's work and these were discussed openly and frankly.

The discussion of these issues served to link the struggle for socialism in South Africa with the much broader question, raised by the crisis in Eastern Europe, of "Has Socialism Failed?". The introduction of this topic by the SACP provoked a stimulating debate on the problem of democracy in socialist societies. Some of the delegates argued that the departures from democracy in Eastern Europe had their origins not in an inadequate theory of socialism but in the misapplication of a basically sound conception. However, the meeting posed two questions: what are the conditions which resulted in the establishment of undemocratic and bureaucratic political systems in Eastern Europe, and how should socialist democracy be defined?

Two main points emerged in the discussion of the latter question. First, while a one-party system cannot be ruled out in principle — particular conditions may make it necessary — nevertheless in general the multi-party system provides one of the favourable conditions for democratic participation. Yet, second, a multi-party parliamentary political system is not, on its own,

sufficient, it has to be supplemented by strong institutions and mass, independent organisations — women, students, trade unions, civics and so forth — which can participate in the decision-making process.

THE ECONOMY

Democratic participation, however, applies not only in the political system but, equally importantly, in the management of the economy. This conclusion surfaced clearly in the discussion which followed the presentation by Alec Erwin of the COSATU paper *An Economic Policy Framework*. Thus, although it was recognised that a mixed economy was inevitable in post-apartheid South Africa, it was agreed that it was vital that both the private and public sectors should be subjected to a coherent plan, democratically arrived at, which would constitute an essential basis for an advance towards socialism.

The common socialist goal of the two participating organisations could not be properly considered, however, outside of the context of the struggle for national liberation. This issue was confronted in a session introduced by the SACP on *The Working Class and the National Question*. It was agreed that the working class was the major social force in the national liberation struggle and, therefore, had to play a pre-eminent role in the ANC. It was necessary to contribute fully to the reconstruction of the ANC inside the country and to ensure its leading role, not only in the present phase of the struggle, but also after the defeat of apartheid because the national question would not disappear overnight.

The meeting then turned its attention to *The Role of the Trade Unions and the SACP in the Present and Future*. In the discussion it was stressed that it was of fundamental importance that COSATU should continue to organise the workers to defend their rights and conditions of work at the point of production *and* to bring the power of the trade unions to bear on the political struggle.

The difficult organisational problems facing the SACP in reconstituting itself as a legal party provoked a good deal of discussion.

The main issue, how does the SACP see its relationship with COSATU, was posed by Comrade Sydney Mafumadi, and this was

supplemented by more specific questions concerning the independence of the trade unions from the Party and the way in which the Party would seek to influence trade union policy. For the SACP, the General Secretary made it plain that all members of the Party in the trade unions and other mass organisations were bound by the discipline and decisions of these organisations. The Party would try to influence trade union policy only through a formal, structured relationship.

In the final session of the meeting Comrade Jay Naidoo presented an analysis of the current situation and of the strategic tasks facing the movement. It was agreed that a prime task was to mobilise the people and to build strong local organisation and leadership around the major issues such as the constituent assembly, land and wealth redistribution. The SACP and COSATU had a common interest with the ANC in urgently carrying forward these tasks.

Several delegates were able to give graphic first-hand accounts of the distressing situation which had developed in various parts of the country, especially Natal, as sections of the Mass Democratic Movement were confronted by murderous bands of vigilantes aided and protected by the police and military. The meeting stressed the urgent need for all progressive forces to unite to rout the reactionaries, douse the flames of conflict and set South Africa firmly on the road to peace and social transformation.

WE HAVE TO MOVE HOUSE

THIS ISSUE OF *The African Communist* represents a break with the past — it was printed in London, whereas all previous issues since No. 37, 2nd Quarter 1969, had been printed in the German Democratic Republic as an act of solidarity by our comrades of the Socialist Unity Party.

The events which took place in the GDR towards the end of last year resulted in the removal of the SED from power, in consequence of which the party was no longer able to carry out many of its functions. In due course it changed its name to the Party of Democratic Socialism and was obliged to cut its coat

according to the amount of cloth available to it. In the parliamentary elections which took place in March the PDS obtained only 16.4 percent of the total vote, a figure reduced to 14.5 percent in the local elections in May. Its role for the foreseeable future will be confined to "constructive opposition".

A consequence of the removal of the Communists from power has been that the GDR is no longer able to provide the range of solidarity services to liberation movements and independent countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America for which it won the honour and respect of all progressive mankind. ANC students had to be withdrawn from GDR institutions and sent back to Africa. *The African Communist* was advised to seek new printers.

From this point of view President De Klerk's speech to Parliament on February 2 lifting the ban on the ANC and SACP was most timeous, and it should have been possible for *The African Communist* to be printed in South Africa as from this issue. However, certain grey areas remained. The AC had been banned under the Publications and Entertainments Act of 1963 which was not repealed by the regime. Until that ban was lifted no printer could take us on. There was also the whole question of the return of exiles, the release of political prisoners, the possibilities for open political activity and other related issues which still had to be sorted out.

Until light was thrown on these grey areas it was not possible for us to make arrangements to print the AC in South Africa, and we accordingly entered into a temporary agreement for the journal to be printed and distributed from London. This may result in some dislocation here and there, but we ask our readers to bear with us for the time being. We give the assurance that as soon as it is possible for us to return home we will do so.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks to our GDR comrades for the magnificent solidarity service they have rendered to *The African Communist*, the SACP and the whole cause of liberation during the period they exercised power. No matter what the faults for which they were eventually punished by the electorate, our comrades gave us whatever assistance they could in the finest spirit of proletarian internationalism. They made a splendid contribution towards the strengthening of our movement and the liberation of our people at

a time when we were fighting with our backs to the wall, defending our very right to exist in the face of the vicious repression of the apartheid state.

When the AC was first printed in the GDR it ran to only 3,000 copies per issue. In the ensuing 21 years our circulation has grown to 18,000. Our GDR comrades bore the cost not only of printing the journal but also of distributing it world-wide. They carried this burden on their own limited resources without complaint, indeed with an enthusiasm for our cause which was most heartening.

The impetus which the socialist countries gave to the movement for liberation and national independence in the formerly colonial territories was phenomenal. Merely by their existence, by proclaiming the policies of social justice, and by their own example of promoting the equality of nations within their own spheres of influence, they forced the imperialist countries to follow suit, to disgorge the ill-gotten booty of colonial conquest and pay at least lip service to the principle of self-determination.

But in addition the socialist countries gave practical aid to freedom fighters in all continents. The contribution of socialist GDR was multi-faceted, consistent and reliable. Perhaps we are only able to appreciate its full significance now that it has been withdrawn.

We on *The African Communist* now have to pay hard cash for the printing of our journal, and the appearance of this issue demonstrates that we, too, now have to cut our coat according to our cloth. We have been obliged to print fewer copies, with fewer pages and a simpler cover and binding, because we can't afford to do any better at the moment. And even this reduced service is under threat unless we can obtain more and regular funding from our readers.

We hope that when we return home we can replenish our resources, drawing new strength from the well of popular support which by all accounts is available to us. But in the meantime we appeal to our readers to come to our aid. The physical task of transferring our records, equipment and personnel to South Africa is enormous, adding to the routine costs of printing and administration which are already beyond our current means. We need your help. Please come to our aid. Help keep *The African Communist* alive and kicking, in fighting trim for the ideological battles that lie ahead. Send a donation today to:

The African Communist, P.O. Box 902, London N19 3YY, England.

APARTHEID'S MASTER PLAN IN RUINS

Revolt in the Bantustans

by Thando Zuma

RECENT EVENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA'S bantustans have revealed the depth of the crisis confronting the apartheid regime in these territories. The first quarter of 1990 saw the crisis exploding into militant semi-insurrectionary mass actions and political strikes. In the case of Ciskei and Venda there were military coups which were greeted jubilantly by the people. In Lebowa, Kangwane and the Transkei, the forces in power have sought and are seeking to identify with the ANC and the whole political movement for full democracy in a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa.

South Africa's bantustans, officially referred to currently by the apartheid state as the "homelands, independent or national states", pose a thorny political question. Ultra-left radical "revolutionary" activists would rather not think about them, still less work out a serious strategy towards them. It is much easier for such ultra revolutionaries to dismiss bantustans as a non-issue for the struggle, except perhaps to mention that they must be destroyed. How they should be destroyed is a question that these radical "revolutionaries" would rather not try to answer.

But these bantustans are a basic part of apartheid policy and it would be shortsighted to ignore them and all political developments within them. The political perspective of serious revolutionaries must be guided by the well-known political maxim that political activists must work wherever the people are to be found. A large percentage of the rural masses have been forced to live in these bantustans and they cannot be ignored.

South African revolutionaries must approach the bantustan question as part of the overall tactics they employ to achieve the strategic objectives of the national democratic revolution. The abolition of the bantustan system is part of our programme of doing away with all apartheid institutions and creating a non-racial, united and democratic South Africa.

The origins of the Bantustan System

A central feature of Colonialism of a Special Type (CST) in South Africa is the socio-political oppression and capitalist exploitation of the black majority of the population. The roots of this CST are the colonial occupation of South Africa which was clearly motivated by the needs of monopoly capitalism, i.e., imperialism. Despite the long-drawn-out wars of resistance by the indigenous people against colonialism, the imperialist forces eventually subjugated the people through the use of gunpowder.

Not that resistance came to a standstill, but the forces of imperialism achieved a relative political control over the black people, particularly after 1910. The formalisation of power in the hands of a ruling class and government drawn exclusively from the white section of the South African population and deliberately devised in such a way as to deny the black majority the right of self-determination, is the clearest expression of the colonial nature of the South African state.

The interpenetration of class exploitation and black oppression are the cornerstones of CST which characterises the whole social formation. The form of this colonialism derives not only from its historical imperialist nature but also from current objective conditions in which the oppressed and oppressor live in the same country. Whatever the forms of political control and capitalist exploitation, the fundamental question of CST cannot be resolved until South Africa becomes a democratic state. The genesis of the bantustans can be located historically in the period of the "Native Reserve" policies of the segregation period (1870-1948, i.e., pre-Nationalist Party governments). These areas in which the African people managed to hold off complete colonial occupation became the basis upon which the Native reserves were created.

What the native policy theoreticians did was recommend to the colonial state the confinement of Africans in these areas for purposes of class exploitation and national domination. One of the main issues around which the Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902) was fought was the question of the supply of cheap labour to the mines. The discoveries of diamonds and gold in 1867 and

1886 respectively attracted international capital and brought about an "industrial revolution" in South Africa.

The mines were to play an important role in shaping the future political economy of South Africa. Most of the gold mines were situated in the South African Republic (SAR), the Transvaal as it is known today. The SAR was during the pre-1899 period under the political control of the Afrikaners. The British mining houses, particularly those associated with Cecil John Rhodes, were involved in gold mining in the SAR.

The South African Republic government, a quasi-feudal and rural oriented entity, was not responsive to the labour demands of the mining capitalists who were mainly English. The attempt by Cecil John Rhodes to take over the South African Republic had failed in the so-called Jameson raid where the South African Republic's soldiers beat off the raiders.

The supply of stable cheap labour power became a crucial focal point on which the South African political economy was to depend. Once the Anglo-Boer war ended, a basis was created for the realisation of the labour needs of mining capital. One of the first political acts of the post-1910 regime was the introduction of the 1913 Native Land Act. This Act set aside 8% of the land area of South Africa for Africans and allocated the rest to the whites. In subsequent legislation (Native Land Amendment Act of 1936) the amount of land set aside for Africans was increased to 13%, although the process of consolidation has yet to be completed. The mines and best agricultural land were allocated outside these "native reserves".

The objective was clear. Through the process of squeezing Africans into 8% of the land area, naturally people would be forced to seek means of livelihood on the mines and white farms. This is the way the process of primitive accumulation took place in South Africa. Marx in *Capital*, Volume One, characterises primitive accumulation as the pre-stage of capitalism during which direct producers on the land are forcibly removed from their means of production and sucked into the wage labour system. They stop being direct producers and become wage slaves. In short this is the process of proletarianisation. Marx says that this process is written in letters of blood. Capital drips with the blood of the former direct producers. How appropriate for South Africa!

These cheap labourers could only go to the mines on a contract basis. A form of taxation was also introduced which had to be paid in cash. Cash was available in the mines. Clearly, therefore, the native policy that was developing was meant in the main to create a cheap labour reservoir for capital. This labour reservoir aspect remains fundamental to the bantustans.

The Apartheid Period

In the post 1948 apartheid period, "native policy" was developed to fit in with the stated policies of the Nationalist Party which was determined to permit the Africans into the white town only "to minister to the needs of the white people". Apartheid represents a higher form of CST.

Through Verwoerd's ministry, a number of native affairs laws were enacted basically in line with the segregationist policies of their predecessors. In 1951, a *Bantu Authorities Act* was enacted. This Act was used to impose government appointed chiefs as local administrators of "tribal areas". Following closely on this, a *Promotion of Bantu Self Government Act* was promulgated in 1959. This act was to lay the basis for the creation of the bantustans later. Traditional chiefs were still to play a role in self-governing areas which were designated in the 1951 Act.

Resistance flared up against the developments of state policy. Chief Luthuli refused to be part of this scheme and in the face of threats resigned his position as chief. In Pondoland, Sekhukhuneland, Witzieshoek, Nqutu and other places, uprisings against Bantu Authorities erupted in 1960 to the level of localised insurrections.

Despite the people's resistance to bantustanisation, the apartheid state went ahead with its programme. Preparations were made for the formal creation of "legislative assemblies" as a prelude to self-government. The *Bantu Citizenship Act* and the *Bantu Homeland Constitution Act* were passed in 1970 and 1971 respectively. The first bantustan to go for "independence" was the Transkei under "paramount chief" Kaiser Matanzima in 1976, only five years after the *Homeland Constitution Act* was passed. Three others followed: Bophuthatswana (1977), Venda (1979) and Ciskei (1981).

Politically, the bantustan system is meant to de-South Africanise Africans by confining them to the reserves, now called "homelands". This attempt is clearly meant to give the ruling class and the regime grounds for arguing that Africans can have self-determination only in the "homelands".

It is also meant to enforce the retribalisation of Africans and the breaking up of any national identity among the African people. It is a powerful weapon used to create "border" fights between "citizens" of one homeland against another. Arising from land shortage these fights do take place now and again, on the basis of the old divide and rule tactic. A kind of "ethnic nationalism" has taken root amongst some of the bantustan "leaders".

Bantustans have facilitated capital accumulation by a bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie in the bantustans, whose power depends on the survival of the

system itself. An unclouded approach informed by CST needs to be vigorously pursued in analysing these class formations in the bantustans and amongst blacks generally. Failure to situate this within CST could lead to ultra-left conclusions which may bear no relation to the multi-class nature of the democratic revolution.

The fundamental question is whether or not revolutionaries should consider the bantustans as a terrain to contest.

The Emergence of Broad Front Politics

Amongst the many organisations which were invited to attend the launching of the Anti-Apartheid Conference (AAC) in Cape Town in September 1988 were those operating in the bantustans. Some of them were: the Democratic People's Party (DPP) from the Transkei, the Progressive People's Party (Bophuthatswana), Seoposengwe Party (Bophuthatswana) and the Inyandza from KaNgwane.

At the Conference for a Democratic South Africa (CDF) on December 9th, 1989, held at the University of the Witwatersrand, again a number of organisations operating in the bantustans together with some bantustan "leaders" such as Gen Holomisa and Enos Mabuza were invited to participate. There were voices which during preparations for the conference were opposed to their being invited, but those who argued for their participation carried the day.

Enos Mabuza is one of the most interesting of all bantustan leaders. He is president of Inyandza, which is not an opposition party but a "governing" party in the KaNgwane bantustan. Inyandza used to be part of Gatsha Buthelezi's Black Alliance together with Inkatha and the Coloured Labour Party. Mabuza broke ranks with the now defunct Black Alliance and has since identified himself with the "forces for change".

In 1986 Enos Mabuza led a delegation of Inyandza to Lusaka for consultations with the African National Congress. The ANC delegation was led by its president Oliver Tambo and included a number of senior national executive committee members. At the end of the meeting, a joint communique was issued which underlined the perspective that various forms of struggle must be explored in the fight against apartheid.

Amongst other points of agreement was that "it was important that other political organisations working within the Pretoria-created institutions should, in the interest of all the people of our country, actively involve themselves in the struggle for the genuine liberation of our country. In this regard, the two delegations agreed that these organisations should work in

co-operation and not in competition with the rest of the mass democratic movement." (Joint communique of the ANC and Inyandza, March 1986.)

Organisers of the CDF and the AAC were put under pressure by many "radical" organisations such as Azacco (Azanian Co-ordinating Committee) and the Pan Africanist Movement (PAM) to explain the reasons behind the seeming about-turn from total opposition to "collaboration" with bantustan politics. The answer was provided as follows: That although these organisations/parties/individuals have been operating within the homeland system, their actions have retarded and even exposed the "fraudulent homeland system". (*New Nation*, September 22-28, 1988, p.12.)

The conference organisers for the AAC had actually laid the basis for the conference in an earlier major paper circulated to all invited organisations. In this paper, they set out the reasons why a broad coalition of all those who wanted to see apartheid eliminated should be forged. They said that,

"In our country today there is increasing polarisation between the apartheid forces and the democratic forces... There are two main protagonists, the minority government and the mass democratic movement... There are many other organisations which are opposed to apartheid, but are not part of the democratic movement... The mass democratic movement must harness and give clear direction to these forces. This task falls on the shoulders of the mass democratic movement because of its centrality, experience and the strides it has made... We should deny (the) apartheid forces any chance of gaining more junior partners among our people."

Azacco later pulled out of the AAC protesting at the presence of organisations such as these. According to them "These organisations and what they stand for has been rejected by the people". Thus for them the AAC was "unprincipled unity which bears no relation with the aspirations of our people". (*New Nation*, September 1988, p.11.) Azacco was formed by Azapo-related activists immediately after the apartheid state banned 17 organisations in February 1988. Azapo (Azanian People's Organisation) was amongst the organisations banned.

Boycott or Participation

There can be no doubt that the bantustan system services the interests of the apartheid state in the main. Those who participate in such structures have traditionally been seen by the resistance movement in South Africa as "sell-outs," because the bantustan system promotes the schemes of the apartheid regime. Ideally all black South Africans are expected to oppose this system because the bantustans are an important aspect of CST.

But the fundamental political issue being addressed here is one of tactics, the issue being how patriotic forces committed to a united South Africa can be brought into the mainstream of resistance politics even though they participate in these state institutions. For example, Gen. Holomisa has posed the question of the return of the Transkei to South Africa. The Holomisa regime has liberalised the political processes there, including the holding of a major ANC rally in Umtata.

Politically, some of these bantustans have been the most repressive areas of South Africa. During the Matanzima dynasty in the Transkei, the level of repression was compared to that of the banana republics of Latin America. All repressive laws which were passed in South Africa were religiously adopted in the Transkei, including the banning of political organisations. The Transkei, Ciskei and Bophuthatswana excelled in their illegalisation of trade unions which were not even banned in South Africa.

In 1986 there were over 500 political detainees in Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Transkei and Venda. In Bophuthatswana, organisations like the National Seoposengwe Party were required to apply for permission from the "Minister of Law and Order" in order to hold meetings attended by more than 20 people. This was the stipulation of the *1979 Internal Security Act* of this bantustan. This kind of harassment was extended to supporters of both the NSP and the PPP. The secretary of the PPP (Rev Lamola) was arrested in 1986 on the allegation that he was not a "citizen" of Bophuthatswana.

It has been made difficult for other mass democratic organisations to operate in Bophuthatswana. Students (particularly at the University of Bop), trade unions and church organisations have suffered at the hands of Mangope's regime. There is also a close working relation between the South African counter-insurgency machinery and the Bophuthatswana police. Together these forces have acted as a pressure on Botswana to stop supporting what they allege are ANC guerillas operating from there. There is an axiom in Bophuthatswana which says that "South Africa's enemies are Bophuthatswana's as well".

The Sebe brothers, Lennox and Charles, used to be the "terrible duo" of the Ciskei. They have since quarrelled and a fierce fratricidal strife has engulfed them. Charles now lives in the Transkei as a "refugee".

The ruthlessness of the Sebe brothers during their close working relations was unsurpassed. Their actions against the trade union movement were extreme. The experience of the South African Allied Workers' Union which was banned in the Ciskei is testimony to this. Its president, Thozamile Gqweta, was detained on a number of occasions. In February 1985, he was handed over to the South African security.

The people living in Mdantsane, the second biggest black township in South Africa, who have been forced into Ciskei without their consent, have been the most affected in terms of union repression. Most of them commute to work in East London but their unions cannot hold meetings in Mdantsane because such union activities are banned.

Unemployment, poverty, homelessness and corruption are commonplace in the bantustans. Glaring examples of this have been given in Transkei and Bophuthatswana. Evidence of favouritism and financial deals involving millions of rands over casinos has been unearthed in both bantustans.

Vigilante groups have also been active in the bantustans, mostly created and supported by the "governing" parties or clique. In KwaZulu, the violence unleashed by Inkatha has been phenomenal. In Lebowa, Gazankulu and KwaNdebele, the Thari a Sechaba, Ximoko, xa Rixaka and Mbokotho have been used by these regimes to force people to support them. Under pressure from the mass democratic movement and the people in the area, the Lebowa and KwaNdebele regimes were forced to disband their vigilante groups.

Struggles and Uprisings

These repressive politics in the bantustans, combined with the objective conditions of poverty and suffering of the majority of the people living there (save for a few who have become the petty/bureaucratic-bourgeoisie primarily through the system and therefore benefitting from it) have created a tense climate in these areas. In Bophuthatswana, Venda, KwaNdebele and Transkei a complex conjunctural interpenetration of national and local socio-political, cultural and economic factors led to open revolt by the people.

In September 1987, under the slogans of "anti-corruption" and "patriotic" resentment of the role of officers from the former Selous Scouts, the Transkei military overthrew the Matanzima dynasty. This was the first coup in the bantustans led by African soldiers which was also "successful". Stella Sigcau, who had been well-disposed towards the ANC, was installed as chief minister for a short while before being removed by the same military under General Bantu Holomisa on 30 December 1987. General Holomisa is now the chairman of a military council and as such remains the "leader" of the Transkei bantustan. General Holomisa cannot easily be dubbed a "puppet" of the apartheid state.

In Bophuthatswana, a bantustan which had been portrayed by the apartheid state as the best example of what the benefits of "homeland independence" could be, an opposition movement has been developing,

based amongst the workers, students, traditional chiefs, and channelled through the PPP, the National Seopesengwe Party and other independent trade unions, student and church movements. Simmering discontent was also brewing within the bantustan armed forces, reflecting the general political frustrations of the population. Some specific grievances within the armed forces, relating particularly to the domineering role which had been allocated to the white officers from the SADF, led to the soldiers' uprising in February 1988 which was put down the same day after the involvement of the South African military.

The significance of the counter-coup was revealed in the statement made by the South African President P.W. Botha immediately after Mangope had been restored to power: "We are tonight back in control".

In Venda a long period of popular agitation culminated in the overthrow of the puppet regime of "President" Frank Ravele in a military coup on April 5, 1990. Under Ravele and his predecessor Mphephu no organised mass movement had been allowed to develop, but democratic forces consistently attempted to defend the interests of the people and the churches and university students were a focus of opposition. Prior to the April coup, an uprising had taken place in August 1988, and although it did not succeed in toppling the Ravele regime it was striking in its popular character. For about eight weeks students had been engaged in a massive school boycott.

The boycott movement started in Tshakuma and quickly spread throughout Venda involving not only students but also workers, teachers, civil servants, taxi-drivers and even some members of the police force. The grievances of the people were similar to those in all the bantustans, but in addition an outbreak of ritual murders provided a focal point of revolt around which the other grievances of the people were concentrated. This uprising revealed the potential for revolutionary organisation and exposed in no uncertain terms the unpopular nature of the Ravele regime. The April 1990 coup climaxed a steadily rising tide of popular protest.

In a radio broadcast the coup leaders said they would demand re-incorporation in South Africa and the restoration of South African citizenship for the Venda people.

The emergence of the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA) in 1987 has contributed a great deal to the organisation of the rural masses in the bantustans, thereby weakening the system. In certain bantustans like KwaZulu and Bophuthatswana, Contralesa is hated by the bantustan dictators. But it has had a good reception in Transkei, KwaNdebele and Lebowa so far. The political stance of

Contralesa, aligned as it is to the mass democratic movement, has increased the crisis of the system.

The full extent of the regime's failure to transform the bantustans into a support-base for apartheid was shown last April when four of six leaders of the so-called "self-governing homelands" boycotted a meeting scheduled to take place with President De Klerk. It is clear that De Klerk had arranged these talks, which were to include leaders from the white, Coloured and Indian houses of the tricameral parliament, to demonstrate that there were African leaders other than the ANC who would have to be involved in negotiations about a future South Africa. But only the Chief Ministers of KwaZulu (Buthelezi) and QwaQwa turned up. An angry De Klerk complained afterwards that the ANC had used "intimidation" to prevent the others from taking part.

All these developments indicate that the bantustans are in no way a terrain to be left alone for the apartheid state and its puppet forces. There is mass indignation and unrest and a vast potential for revolutionary advance.

In its annual statement on January 8, 1988 the ANC indicated its willingness to become involved in bantustan politics:

"New possibilities exist for the people to act decisively to turn these enemy-created institutions against their creator, the Pretoria regime... Our people should join hands with those (forces) within the bantustan administrative system that are prepared to break with the apartheid regime and join the people in struggle for a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa. Contrary to the wishes of the enemy, *there are many of these (forces) — politicians, chiefs, soldiers, police and civil servants — who are willing to act in the national (democratic) interest against those who employ them.*

"Let us act together with these healthy forces to transform what the enemy conceived of as its rear-base of counter-revolution into *forward trenches of militant struggle for the victory of the national democratic revolution*".

Communist Party

In its programme adopted in 1989 the South African Communist Party likewise highlights the revolutionary potential in the bantustans.

"Within the economy of apartheid colonialism the bantustans serve as suppliers of cheap labour and as dumping grounds for the unemployed, the aged and the sick. Apart from migrant labourers and 'commuters', who are forced to travel for many hours from dormitory townships, the vast majority of people in the bantustans are workers' families, unemployed workers and poor peasants. They are linked in many ways, direct and indirect, to the South African working class in their outlook and in their objective interests. Their demands are for land, for the

right to settle where they choose, for secure and rewarding work, and for an end to the corruption and repressive actions of the bantustan authorities. In their struggle to achieve these demands, the rural masses are the major social ally of the working class in the struggle for national liberation movement, and the long-term struggle for the socialist transformation of our country."

The population of the bantustans, both 'independent' and 'self-governing', is about 15 million, out of a total South African population of about 40 million. The liberation movement must now as a matter of urgency devise an effective strategy for drawing this huge force more effectively into the revolutionary process.

POSTSCRIPT

On May 15, 1990, the Minister of Development Aid, Stoffel van der Merwe, told the South African parliament that the government had given up trying to turn the six "self-governing" homelands into independent countries. Independence was no longer considered a worthwhile option, he said. The territories' constitutional future was a matter for negotiation.

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The Indian People and the National Democratic Movement

by Abdul Karrim

Contradictory cultures of resistance and collaboration shape the response of the Indian community to the national democratic revolution. This article agrees with the call made by some NIC and TIC activists at the meeting between a cross-section of the Indian community and the ANC in October 1988 for an assessment of the appropriateness of previously held analyses and strategic and tactical positions.

IT AIMS TO ANALYSE the Indian reality in the light of two strands of resistance and collaboration which permeate the community. This contribution will take the following as its basic theses:

- the place of the Indian community in the developing South African nation cannot be seen in isolation from that of the national question generally. The solution of the national question, in turn, takes into account the specifics of the ethnic and cultural groups in the country;
- that the national oppression faced by Indians, Coloureds and Africans lays the basis for these people to address themselves to a common enemy;
- the recognition of class differentiation assists in the exposure of both a democratic and a reactionary culture in every group.

- despite the existence of a minority, reactionary, collaborationist group, there is an objective basis for the unity of the major section of the Indian people with the rest of the exploited sections of South Africa;
- the phenomenon of inter-racial/inter-ethnic conflict must be placed in its socio-economic context, and seen as the tool of state policy and of reactionary forces within both the black and white communities;
- ultimately the national question can only be solved in the process of struggle — now and in a post-apartheid South Africa. The struggle against apartheid should lay the basis for the resolution of this question, while the achievement of state power by the democratic forces will allow us to intervene more decisively.

The Indian Community Today

The Indian community has enjoyed an upward mobility in relation to the rest of the oppressed. The 70's and 80's have witnessed a process whereby its overwhelmingly proletarian character with middle class elements and a limited commercial bourgeoisie has changed due to the specific place the Indian community occupies in the South African political economy.

Today the community is broadly divided into those facing severe hardships not unlike those of their exploited compatriots in the African and Coloured communities, the large middle strata and the significant commercial, industrial, agricultural and financial bourgeoisie.

Where in 1911, 142,670 Indians were involved in the agricultural sector¹, in 1980 the figure stood at 3,122! Furthermore, in the Transvaal the Indian proletariat has disappeared completely, having been absorbed into supervisory and clerical positions. In fact, the supervisory and clerical sector constitutes almost 25% of the total economically active Indians (TEA) which numerically is 256,000². The figure for clerical workers is 49,209 and that for supervisors and other such categories 13,493.

The manufacturing sector, which at this point displays the highest level of militancy among Indian workers, represents about 37% of total economically active Indians. In 1985 the figure stood at 88,600 after having peaked to 95,300 in 1981.³ This decline is due mainly to increasing unemployment, which for the Indian community stood at 23,000 in 1985.⁴

The main branches of manufacturing in which Indian workers are involved include: clothing, textiles, food and footwear (all employing more than 5,000 Indians). Of the number of Indians employed in the manufacturing sector the majority are unionised under the recently launched South African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU).

Those sections employed as supervisors, clerks, and industrial workers (representing about 62% of the TEA) are part of the struggling masses of South Africa. They suffer economic hardships in common with other exploited South Africans. A survey carried out by *Monitor*, a journal of the Human Rights Trust, of the different communities in Port Elizabeth revealed that Africans, Coloureds and Indians all cite apartheid policy, unemployment, racial discrimination and the shortage of housing as among the biggest problems faced.⁵

Whereas Africans may have been educated to be nothing more than 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' Indians were channelled into clerical positions. Due account has to be given to those in the upper supervisory and clerical layer who may be above the station of 'boss boys' and whose income allows them to escape the category of the struggling masses. This more privileged group, in conjunction with the professionals, traders and artisans, could be seen as the middle classes of the Indian communities. Of the middle strata the professionals are the most significant, representing 10% of the TEA, with teachers making up about half the number. During the 60's, 70's and the first half of the 80's the Indian community had the greatest concentration of university graduates.

Most Indians use English as their sole language⁶. Of those still using the languages of their forefathers the Hindi and Tamil-speaking are by far the largest while there are many Telegu, Gujarati, and Urdu speakers. The two main religions are Hinduism (the overwhelming majority) and Islam, while a few are Christians. The remainder consists of Buddhists and atheists.

The implementation of the Group Areas Act has had a major impact on sections of the Indian community. It is usually the middle-aged and older group, that is people in their forties and older, who have felt the impact most. They were adolescents or older when they were forcibly removed from their residential areas.

Reactionary Tendency and Reality

Progressives, long fed on the splendid history of resistance of the Indian people, particularly of the 40's and 50's, must be as bold as the activists who met the ANC in Lusaka and admit that 'physical/geographical (residential) separation of the Indian sector from the African sector for 25 years has led to the development of a narrow, insular approach to national political questions and a kind of cultural introversion'.⁷

The state, aided by reactionaries, encourages a xenophobic 'minority syndrome' which is based on some aspects of the Indian reality. The

reactionaries would, for example, point out that the Indian reality is such that ordinary Indians could arise from their Chatsworth home, send their children to an Indian school, travel on a bus owned and driven by Indians, buy a lunch time meal of Indian curry from an Indian owned take-away, consult Indian doctors at the RK Khan Hospital, be represented by an Indian attorney; pray, play, shop amongst Indians, be protected by Indian policemen and sleep to the tune of an Indian radio station. In fact, the reactionaries would argue, the Indians in South Africa are better off than they would ever have been in India so why should they change their situation?

The constant reminder that Indians have an ancient civilisation is used by the reactionaries to encourage a sense of cultural superiority over the African and Coloured people. The high percentage of professionals or the number of successful matriculants are used to argue that Indians enjoy a mental superiority over other black people.

The comparatively low crime rate in the Indian community is produced as evidence that other communities are inherently violent. The experiences of Indians in Cato Manor, Evaton and Inanda and in some independent African countries are used to encourage fear for the future under majority rule. Hinduism and Islam are used to justify fatalism.

The group which has most consistently pursued such reactionary policies and which benefits most from it is the Indian upper class. A survey of the history of the Indian community in South Africa reveals that while there has been a militant tradition, a moderate or reformist leadership has also been in existence. The latter originated from the Indian merchant class which accompanied those who arrived under conditions very similar to that of slavery. The reformist grouping sought to distance itself from indentured and ex-indentured workers. Indeed, they went to the extent of saying that it was unfortunate that 'all Indians, indentured, freed and free are attempted to be put on same scale'.⁸

In the first few decades of this century this reformist grouping occupied centre stage in Indian politics, waging campaigns which sought to alleviate the 'lot of the community'. In reality these campaigns were directed at the improvement of business opportunities of the emerging commercial bourgeoisie whilst trying to rally the other Indian classes behind their demands.

Ethno-centrism

The policies advanced by the early moderates and present day reactionaries can only be labelled as 'Indian ethnocentrism'. Lacking a common territory, language or religion, their separatism can only take the form of extra-

territorial autonomy. Untenable scientifically and practically, the idea that Indians — because of their cultural peculiarities — constitute a separate nation is politically reactionary. The exercise of extra-territorial autonomy (which is also fostered by the regime) is described, in part, by Yunus Carrim:

‘Hindi and Arabic are offered at schools, rather than Zulu. Pupils are also given a half-day off in mourning for Indira Gandhi’s death. ‘Indian culture’ is given concerted encouragement.’⁹

For the Indian people, whose daily life allows for the minimal contact with the African people, the racially divided education system can only mean the perpetuation of their isolation.

The building of non-racial unity in struggle has been the constant objective of progressive activists. There are various historical and contemporary blockages which need to be overcome. Organisers in the Indian community have to struggle against the effects of events such as those in Cato Manor, Inanda and Evaton. Many sections of the Indian people, especially the present older generation, have tended to develop a persecution complex, seeing the African masses as ‘anti-Indian’.¹⁰

What persists of this self perceived ‘anti-Indianism’ is used by the reactionaries to tie the Indian masses to their own collaborators, wooing them away from African/Indian unity. Historically the phenomenon arose from the practices of the Afrikaner petit-bourgeoisie who saw the Indian merchants as a threat to their livelihood. Hence the use of various devices to curb Indian commercial expansion — segregated trading areas, disallowing Indians into the Orange Free State and the fanning of racial animosity between Africans and Indians as witnessed by the 1949 ‘riots’ in Cato Manor.¹¹

Writing about the tragic events in 1985 Heribert Adam says:

‘Inanda is the only area in South Africa where Africans and Indians live side by side, albeit in different classes... though many Indians, too, dwell in shacks. The riots confirmed the success of the state in alienating the divided segments from each other through separate institutions and different incorporations.’¹²

The present day experience of ‘inter-ethnic/racial’ conflict also arises from a set of conditions to which different sectors of the African people react. It occurs in the context of the harsher privations African people suffer. The endemic poverty of the African people, especially in Natal where the vast majority of Indians live, makes the contrast starker given the relative economic advance of the Indian people over the past two decades. The relationship between Indians and Africans is confined to largely master/

domestic servant, boss/worker, supervisor/underling, shopkeeper/consumer. The way many Indians relate to Africans at a personal/social level helps to fan the hostility which arises from the above mentioned relations.¹³

Furthermore, the likes of Gatsha Buthelezi, threatened by the progressive Indian elements in Natal, brandish the spectre of the 1949 riots, exploiting the base feelings of the communities. Their aim is to instil fear and hostility towards the progressive leadership.

The spontaneous reaction of the Indian community, save for those who have been actively involved in non-racial struggle, is to withdraw into their purdah and sleep with the devil they know. This reaction, like most spontaneous reactions only serves and gladdens the enemy. Indian ethno-centrism and anti-Indianism are two sides of the same coin; they feed on each other.

House of Delegates

The reactionary interpretation of Indian reality is also used by the regime to pursue its goal of suppressing the Indian masses. The colonial masters, having failed to blot out the Indian people through repatriation schemes and restrictions on Indian nationals migrating to South African, now superimpose the apartheid ideology over the reactionary interpretation of the Indian reality — hoping to co-opt the entire community. It can be concluded that ethno-centrism and the apartheid ideology fuel each other. This is not without its contradictions. The tri-cameral system is the latest measure to be used in the pursuance of such a strategy.

The 1984 and 1989 elections of the Indian component of the Tricameral system, the House of Delegates, has returned a consistent poll of only 20% of the registered voters. This comes down to about 10% of the potential voters. Campaigns around the elections by progressive organisations stressed solidarity with the African majority, the incapacity of the House of Delegates to bring about change and the tradition of resistance to apartheid in the Indian community. However, the consistency of the poll figures shows that the collaborators have been able to consolidate a percentage of the electorate into a bloc. The distribution of the votes indicates that this bloc is spread through various sectors of the community.¹⁴

The House of Delegates has been given a certain leverage which it uses to effect. Thus a system of patronage has been developing where those belonging to the correct language group and found to be politically

acceptable are given promotion, speedy allocations of homes and trading licences, among other things. The cases of nepotism abounded to such an extent that the state had to appoint the James Commission of Inquiry into the conduct of Amichand Rajbansi. It has emerged that those belonging to the Hindi speaking group have been most favoured by Rajbansi's regime. It is practices of this nature which, in part, explain the spread of the voters through various class backgrounds. The factors which promote ethno-centrism complete the explanation.

While this bloc has become consolidated there has also been a consolidation of the majority opposed to the Tricameral scheme. The cases of corruption — be it nepotism, greasing of palms or personal kick-backs — have discredited the collaborators even further. They have come to be seen by many as 'an embarrassment to the community'.¹⁵

A common thread of a moral and principled opposition to apartheid runs through the section opposed to the Tricameral system. This opposition has made possible the mobilisation of major sections of the community in the pursuit of a just and equitable system. But, as argued above, such opposition comes unstuck on the thorny issues of social relations. It is clear that the majority of Indians are steadfast in the pursuit of power for the people and can play an even greater role. However, if the issues identified above on the question of resolving the national question in relation to the Indian community are not addressed it could become a community alienated from the post-apartheid progressive developments.

The exploitation of the Indian community — though veiled by relatively better housing, higher state and private funding of education and training and cheaper transport — cannot be wished away under the present system. As the masses increasingly assert themselves, the inability of the House of Delegates, and the rest of the structures of apartheid, to bring about major changes will become clearer.

A Culture of Resistance

Reaction has spun the threats of Indian experience into a web of false self-perception and deceptions about other South Africans and about their positions in South Africa.

Democrats must take as their starting position that 'this process of spreading a national (as opposed to ethnic or tribal) consciousness and the national consolidation of existing state entities is, in the modern African era, generally a weapon of liberation and social advance.'¹⁶ The strategic task facing democrats is to untangle the web of deception and weave a new

tapestry representative of the racial oppression and exploitation Indians suffer in common with the majority of South Africans. This weaving process must highlight the need for unity.

"The struggle for national cohesion in multi-ethnic communities does not imply the imposition of cultural uniformity. Cultural diversity does not stand in contradiction to national unity. Such a unity can be made up of a totality of both distinct and inter-mingling cultures which in their totality constitute the culture of the... people as a whole'.¹⁷

It is a fact that the Indians of South Africa display distinct differences in their socio-cultural make-up from that of their relatives in other parts of Africa. Apart from the Indians who landed in Mauritius none of the other communities have a history of indentured labour. This basic class difference, with the Indians in the rest of the continent being mainly of merchant origin, lays an objective basis for the incorporation of much of what is regarded as being Indian into the national democratic culture.

When referring to the culture of the Indian people in South Africa it is incorrect to refer to it as 'Indian' culture: it is very much an Indian South African culture — Indians in South Africa, despite the ambiguities they may express about other South Africans, do not owe an allegiance to the Indian state. Relations with the sub-continent are based largely on religious, cultural and familial grounds. Such relations can only be afforded by those with the means. Returning to India is not entertained as an option if 'things get bad for the Indians'. Despite 'a strong sense of being Indian' (Carrim) there is an equally strong sense of being South African.

At the same time we must guard against the tendency of rejecting all that is Indian — which some of the less mature activists have tended to do. We must seek out, encourage and bring to the fore each and every spark of democracy in every religion or cultural form.

The strands can be drawn from history. Despite the posturing of some of the moderates in the first few decades of this century, the history of the Indian people remains the history of struggle against colonialism and apartheid. The 1911 strike on the coal mines by Indian workers, the principles of *Satyagraha* and the campaigns led by Gandhi, are examples which still find resonance in the Indian community — particularly among the older generations. The passive resistance campaigns, the forced removals due to the Group Areas Act, the Dadoo-Xuma-Naicker pact, Ahmed Kathrada... these are factors with which the community identifies and which continue to shape much of the community's political perceptions.

Most importantly, the culture of struggle comes from the deprivation common to all blacks due to unemployment and high rentals, expensive medicine in overcrowded hospitals and clinics, a costly education which prepares their children inadequately and the pittance which is dished out as old age pensions.

It comes from the tradition of joint struggle which is being revived under the leadership of the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the united democratic front and which will be stimulated now that the ANC and SACP are legal once again.

Common Future

Ultimately, it comes from the vision of a common future which the President of the African National Congress, OR Tambo, elaborated most clearly: 'We conceive of our country as a single united democratic and non-racial state, belonging to all who live in it, in which all shall enjoy equal rights, and in which sovereignty comes from the people as a whole, and not from a collection of bantustans and racial and tribal groupings organised to perpetuate minority power.'¹⁸

From the 1940's onwards, the main Indian-based political organisations have been led by far-sighted patriots. Radical leadership has emerged from the middle strata, as well as the working class. Of the former it is the professionals who, owing no loyalty to the authorities and armed with an enlightened world view, have stepped forward into leadership roles. It should be emphasised though that this leadership derives its progressive nature mainly from its identification with — not in spite of — the working class.

Today the numerically significant middle strata responds in sympathy to or actively supports the NIC/TIC. Some elements from this strata however, have problems with the 'Indian' tag and prefer to work with organisations which have a strictly non-racial form. The radicals of today, as well as those of the fifties, represent the democratic culture of the toiling masses, but the life blood of this culture remains in the womb of the working class.

Indian big-businessmen, almost to a man, collaborate in some government structure or other. They must be made to realise that while the whites regulate and deregulate trading areas today, the extent to which they can significantly improve their lot is deliberately hemmed in. As Joe Slovo explains:

"Under a people's government the black middle and upper classes will be better off economically and in every other aspect of their lives than they are now. In this

sense the national democratic revolution represents their immediate interests as a class; it provides a legitimate and principled basis for the kind of inter-class alliance which is projected by our liberation front."¹⁹

Mobilising the Indian Community

The key organisations addressing themselves to the political mobilisation of the Indian people have had to resort to a combination of arousing people around the question of basic issues such as wages, rents and the cost of living, as well as on the basis of a moral commitment to justice and fair play.

Since the repressive days of the early 60's to the beginning of the 80's the Indian working class has been playing a relatively passive role. This occurred despite the massive waves of strikes during 1973 which rocked the Durban area where the greatest concentration of Indian workers is located. Shamim Marie in her contribution on the history of the Indian workers described this period as one in which 'African workers had started to rise up. Indian workers stood by and watched'.²⁰

It is generally agreed that the relative passivity of the Indian workers during these two decades was due to a number of factors including the further division of Indians from their fellow African workers through the movement into more skilled, supervisory and clerical jobs, the effects of the Group Areas Act and other apartheid institutions, the state's increased per capita expenditure on Indian education and housing, and, perhaps most importantly, the repression which the Indian working class movement had to face from as early as the beginning of the 50's.

However, the 1980's have seen spectacular developments within the Indian community which have underlined the commitment of major sections to the destruction of apartheid. The following serve as highlights in these developments: the 1980/81 education and rent boycotts, the 1981 Anti-SAIC campaign, the rejection of the tri-cameral system in 1984 and again in 1989. The funeral in Chatsworth in 1988 of fallen MK cadre Lenny Naidoo and in Lenasia in December 89 of Prakash Napier and Yusuf Akhalwaya are further indications of the often over-looked potential grassroots militancy which has seen many Indians join the ranks of the People's Army/Umkhonto we Sizwe and the underground structures of the ANC and the SACP.

The most striking advance has been in the clothing and textile sectors where the majority of the Indian working people in Natal are employed. These sectors have been transformed from passive sectors to militant ones,

returning uniformly high figures for the stayaways called for June 6, 7 and 8 in 1988 as well those called for September 6, 1989.

It was not surprising, then, that within this climate a broad delegation of about 70 Indian men and women with occupations ranging from workers, trade unionists, doctors, teachers, priests of different religions, to owners of factories met with the ANC in October 1988. This meeting represented the formal recognition by a significant section of the Indian community of the ANC as the vanguard of the national democratic struggle.

Nevertheless, there have also been contradictory tendencies. Organisers in the Indian areas reported in 1985 the growth of a conservatism which was not only in response to events at Inanda and Evaton, where Indian businesses were looted, but also to the overtly violent form the struggle was assuming in the African townships during the uprisings of 1984-1986. Organisers in Indian areas, some of whom had been active in their communities since the 70's, were expressing exasperation at the fact that, despite almost five years of consistent work promoting the ideals of non-racialism, the community was reacting in such a negative manner.

Reactionaries encouraged this by exploiting fears which were a product of the state's divide and rule policy. During the conflicts in Inanda, false alarms spread in Indian areas of impending attacks by Africans would send people either scuttling into their homes or, armed with pangas and other weapons including firearms, into the so-called 'defence committees'. These were largely run by people with reactionary connections and could be found in areas which were a great distance from any African township as well as those immediately adjacent.

It was a period of introspection as activists battled to find the correct approach to organising the Indian community in that climate. It was also a period when the state and its collaborators were refining their methods for their overall objective — that of co-opting the entire Indian community into the apartheid system.

Progressive Ethnicity

Lenin, in his explanation of the process of cultural differentiation provides further insight into the question as to why a community having such a rich history of resistance, with a relatively well-developed tradition of working class struggle, can still have moments of reactionary fervour or even long periods of passivity. He says:

"The elements of democratic and socialist culture are present, if only in rudimentary form, in every national culture, since in every nation there are

toiling masses, whose conditions inevitably give rise to the ideology of democracy and socialism. But every nation also possesses a bourgeois culture (and most nations a reactionary and clerical culture as well) in the form, not merely of 'elements', but of the dominant culture'.²¹

It is clear that the Indian community is not a homogeneous grouping with predictable responses and attitudes. That there exists an objective basis for the Indian community to develop a South African consciousness over and above an ethnic one is also clear. Given the peculiarities of this section of the South African oppressed, it must be recognised that there are certain obstacles to the development of a national, democratic consciousness.

The objective of the vanguard movement must be to reach the point where this community can be led by the ANC without the mediation of progressive Indian organisations. Leadership arising from the African masses is recognised as leadership of all the people. This requires that progressive Indian organisations surrender, step-by-step, terrain which is being organised by national formations like the South African Youth Congress, non-racial women, professional and sports organisations, as well as formations which span the religious spectrum. The strides made by the clothing and textile workers under the leadership of the Congress of South African Trade Unions stands in the van of the developments possible by the pursuit of such an approach.

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The Road to the “Black Republic” in South Africa

by Nyawuza

The 7th Congress of the South African Communist Party held in 1989 instructed its Political Bureau to “re-examine the cases of S.P. Bunting and others expelled from the CPSA in the early 1930’s as representatives of an alleged ‘right wing danger’ with a view to the annulment of the expulsion orders against them.”

THIS ARTICLE SEEKS TO GIVE a historical picture of and background to the debate in the Comintern on the Black Republic slogan and also give an account of the mood, attitudes and political trends at the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928 and in the CPSA after the Sixth Congress.

Until recently there were within the movement still differences of opinion on the interpretation of the Black Republic slogan. Writing in 1964 Terence Africanus had this to say:

“The Sixth World Congress of the International in 1928 discussed the situation in South Africa and the policy of the Party. It summed up its deliberations by adopting, against the will of the South African delegation, the perspective slogan of an ‘Independent Native Republic.’ Looked back at with the wisdom of forty years experience, we see that was not a suitable slogan and it has never been revived.”¹

On the other hand Lerumo, in 1970, was of the opinion that the present programme of the national liberation movement in South Africa embodies the idea of the Black Republic:

"To my mind... it (the Black Republic) contains little that is not in essence in our Freedom Charter."²

The Clouds Gather

Up till the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928 the policy of the Communist Party of South Africa was based on an anti-racist programme which strove for a united front of black and white workers fighting for a socialist South Africa.

Class struggle was viewed as the main means to achieve this goal; class struggle would overthrow the bourgeoisie and emancipate both black and white workers. The national question, whose main essence is the national liberation of the Africans and other nationally oppressed people in South Africa, was not considered a priority at this time — it was even regarded as a controversial issue, as H.J. and R.E. Simons observed:

"The concept of African power was so far removed from current ideologies and apparent realities, however, that even veteran communists doubted whether it was sound."³

In the Comintern itself the problem of the national question in South Africa was raised in 1925 in an article by N. Petrov, "The National Question and the Working Class Movement in South Africa," in which he emphasised the colonial character and origin of the national question in South Africa.⁴ But the first serious attempt to orient on this question was made at the Brussels Congress of the League Against Imperialism in 1927. One would agree with Jack and Ray Simons when they say:

"The concept of a democratic independent Native Republic was certainly inherent in the Brussels resolutions."⁵

But one is bound to disagree with them when they add that this "involved no more than parliamentary reform of the kind introduced into western Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century,"⁶ for the simple reason that the Brussels resolution demanded:

"The right of self-determination based on the complete overthrow of capitalist and imperialist rule,"⁷

and went further to call upon the South African workers to unite

“in order to fight international exploitation of the colonial and semi-colonial countries of the East by capitalism and imperialism” and “to strive for mutual understanding leading to the unity and solidarity of the working class in its own interests and in the interests of all other workers and oppressed peoples throughout the world.”⁸

This Brussels resolution, drafted and signed by J.I. Gumede, J. La Guma and D. Colrairie, putting into proper perspective the relationship between the national question and class struggle, signalled the storms that were later to gather over this question. After the Brussels Congress Gumede who was President General of the ANC at the time, and La Guma proceeded to the Soviet Union via Germany. In Moscow La Guma had discussions with the members of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) about the South African question.

In April 1927 they were both in South Africa but before the end of the year they were back in Moscow to attend the celebrations of the 10th anniversary of the October Revolution. In the meantime the ECCI had drafted resolutions on South Africa and these were still being discussed by the Executive Committee of the Communist Party. Jack and Ray Simons note:

“The party’s annual conference, held at the end of 1927, viewed the Comintern’s resolutions on South Africa with mixed feelings; and decided that the Central Executive should discuss them with La Guma and Gumede on their return from the Soviet Union before reporting to the ECCI.”⁹

This, perhaps, explains why up to then the Comintern had not yet published these resolutions. But an article written in the Comintern journal by “PK” at the end of 1927 on “The Working Class Movement in South Africa and the Tasks of the Communist Party in South Africa” was said to be a summary of a “recently adopted resolution” on South Africa by the ECCI. The article stated, among other things, that the socio-economic and political divisions which hinder the process of the emancipation of the South African proletariat from bourgeois-nationalist ideology has divided the South African working class into workers of the colonising, ruling nation and those of the oppressed, disfranchised, indigenous nation. Though the article did not say anything about the “Native Republic” (or “Black Republic” to use the parlance of today) it actually pointed in that direction.¹⁰

The Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of South Africa invited Gumede to a special session on 27 February 1928 and he reported about his trip to the Soviet Union. After a friendly discussion ("The proceedings of the meeting were of an informal character") there was a 1½ hour discussion "during which no resolutions were moved nor any action taken."¹¹ The friendly nature and character of the meeting with the President-General of the ANC testified to the seriousness with which the Party took its relations with the ANC, an independent organisation, and strictly observed the normal code of conduct in dealing with its leadership.

The Slogan is Rejected

The meeting with La Guma, a party member, was different. He had left Moscow for Cape Town on 2 January 1928 and it was only after being summoned from Cape Town to a meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the Party in Johannesburg on 15 March 1928 that he gave a report about his Moscow trip. There was a heated debate on the slogan of the Black Republic. The African members of the Central Executive Committee (Makabeni, Thibedi, Phooko) rejected the slogan. Arguing that the slogan was "racist" and "Garveyite," Phooko said:

"...the slogan... will be a means of placing power in the hands of the chiefs who will use it for their own ends."¹²

Makabeni based his rejection on the argument that the slogan might be suitable for the future and, Bunting supporting, was of the opinion that the cause of differences of opinion was the road to the Black Republic. He was wrong. Only Molly Wolton and her husband Douglas supported the slogan. Douglas Wolton regarded the participation of the whites in the struggle as not important and was of the opinion that only the proletarian revolution would bring about unity between black and white workers. He said:

"Eventually blacks must predominate in this country, a Black republic be realised. The collaboration of the white workers [is] of secondary importance. Unity will only be realised after the proletarian revolution in South Africa is achieved. [The] slogan Workers of the World Unite is abstract in this country..."¹³

This statement by Wolton is full of contradictions. To say that the collaboration of the white workers in the struggle in South Africa was of "secondary importance" (and this was said in 1930) was to imply that the white workers were being asked to help (if they wanted) the Africans to liberate themselves from national oppression but that this had little (if

anything) to do with the white workers. This would therefore mean that the black liberation struggle was irrelevant to the aspirations of the white workers; to their struggles for class and social emancipation.

Surely Douglas Wolton contradicted himself when he regarded the slogan *Workers of the World Unite* to be abstract in South Africa. The very Comintern which fathered the idea of a Black Republic (which he supported) was founded on the basis of this slogan and the question of national liberation of the blacks in South Africa was inspired by and an expression of the need for this unity of the international working class in its struggle against exploitation, colonialism and racism.

At the meeting of 12 April 1928 Bunting accepted aspects of the slogan and added:

"It is not necessary to resort to anti-white sentiments to rally natives. Support of national movements has never led anywhere. Does not the slogan imply 'independent of whites' or at least barely tolerant of them? The slogan is not clear. The supporters of the slogan all show an anti-white attitude. The slogan is a social democratic, social patriotic cry. We cannot tell what lines the liberation of African workers will take."¹⁴

Though Wolton and Bunting did not deal with the essence and implications of the Black Republic slogan, this question was "settled" — as far as the Party was concerned — at the meeting of the Central Executive Committee on 10 May 1928 when two position papers were presented — one by Douglas Wolton for the slogan and one by S.P. Bunting against. The results were an eight to two majority in favour of Bunting.¹⁵

The Sixth Comintern Congress

In this complicated situation of a process of clarification within the Party leadership about the content and character of the South African revolution, a process which took the form of struggle for the understanding of the essence of the Black Republic slogan, the Communist Party of South Africa was informed in May 1928 that the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern would commence on 17 July 1928.¹⁶ B. Weinbrenn proposed that the Communist Party should not participate at the Sixth Comintern Congress but his was defeated and S.P. Bunting, Rebecca Bunting and Edward Roux, who was then studying in London, were elected as delegates. Edward Roux was also to participate at the Fifth Congress of the Communist Youth International which was to take place immediately after the Sixth

Comintern Congress.¹⁷ The Draft Programme of the Sixth Comintern Congress was presented at the meeting of the Central Executive Committee on 5 July 1928 and it was agreed that discussion should be taken up by the branches.¹⁸ Surely the delegates to the Sixth Congress of the Comintern were by then on their way to Moscow!

In this tense situation, characterised by misunderstanding and differences of opinion, there started a gossip and rumour-mongering within the Party. Thibedi reported that he saw in Wolton's desk a typed manuscript which was critical of Bunting and contained information about relations between blacks and whites in the Party. Thibedi further revealed that La Guma was distributing a document amongst Party members. These revelations gave rise to suspicions that Wolton and La Guma were sending false and secret reports to the Executive Committee of the Comintern. Wolton and La Guma denied these allegations but La Guma conceded that frequent communications were passing between him and members of the Comintern Executive.¹⁹

In Moscow the Sixth Congress was opened by Bukharin who dealt with the world revolutionary movement. In the discussion of Bukharin's address, Bunting made a contribution in which he emphasised the role of the black workers. The African working class was still in its infancy but it was growing fast, he said. Discussing the migrant labour situation, he reported that since the leadership of the ICU had affiliated to the yellow Amsterdam International, the Party had decided to form new trade unions which were already engaged in strikes and were affiliated to the Red International of Labour Unions. Bunting accused the Comintern of being less knowledgeable about Africa than the Red International of Labour Unions and called for better contacts between the various sections of the Comintern. He challenged the formulations in the draft programme of the Comintern which differentiated between "proletariat" in the capitalist countries and "masses" in the colonies and in a rather sharp tone he asked:

"Is this differentiation between European proletariat and 'colonial masses' not the same way our 'labour aristocracy' treats the black workers?"²⁰

In his attempt to emphasise the South African specifics vis-à-vis the rest of Africa, Bunting described South Africa as a "white man's country", meaning a country in which whites could live, unlike many other parts of Africa. He had to pay dearly for this unwise formulation. What made things worse was that he was against the Comintern slogan of the Black Republic, although he

did not raise this question in his intervention — at least not at this stage of the debate. He was attacked severely by Dunne (USA) and Bennet of the Anglo-American Secretariat whose speeches bordered on inciting the Comintern Congress against Bunting.

Colonialism of a Special Type

Edward Roux also spoke and emphasised the African question. He dealt with the new phenomenon of the emergent African working class and anti-colonial resistance in Africa and suggested that the Comintern as a matter of duty should integrate this new movement into the world-wide movement against imperialism.²¹

Roux went further to propound a theory that in Africa there are two forms of imperialism (he also used the words “two imperialisms”) which are antagonistic to each other. Although united in their exploitation of the African proletariat, they differ in their methods. He mentioned what he called the white “local Afrikaner imperialism with its headquarters in the Union of South Africa [and]... the broader imperialism, with its headquarters in Europe.”²²

Edward Roux was staggering in the right direction. In a curious way he was working out the South African specifics or what the South African liberation movement now calls *Colonialism of a Special Type*. This refers to the situation where the coloniser and the colonised reside “side by side” in the same territory, which has been the case since 1910 when Britain granted political power to the whites in South Africa who used it to further oppress the black majority. Without casting doubt on the honest intentions of Edward Roux to help the Comintern understand Africa, and especially the enormity and complexity of the problems facing freedom fighters, his deficient class analysis and Marxist understanding generated more heat than light. He told the Comintern Congress:

“The present South African government is a government of landowners, petty bourgeoisie and the aristocracy of labour and is directed on the one hand against the big industrial capitalists and on the other hand against the oppressed native workers.”²³

Roux, like Bunting before him, over-emphasised the factor of good climatic conditions which ostensibly accounted for the presence of more Europeans in South Africa than anywhere on the continent. Yet the question was not *how many* Europeans lived in Africa but *how* they lived.

In the discussion of the report on the national and colonial question given by Otto Kuusinen, Bunting reported that the Native Republic slogan proposed by the Comintern was rejected by the majority of the Party "mainly for practical reasons."²⁴ It is true that here Bunting was not expressing his personal views but the collective views of the Party leadership. But he did not stop at that; he went further to say:

"From our experience it seems simply impossible to harp too exclusively on the national chord in colonial matters. In an earlier debate, I ventured the opinion that it might not be so universally true that the chief function of a colonial people was to engage in a national struggle (predominantly agrarian in character) against foreign imperialism and for independence..."²⁵

This seems to be the crux of the conflict between Bunting and the Comintern. This marginalisation of the significance of the national question with the resultant half-hearted support for national liberation struggles led Bunting logically, if not inevitably, to a pessimistic attitude towards the African National Congress:

"The African National Congress, which the resolution wants us to boost up, is a moribund body, it has had its day".²⁶

It is true that the ANC was weak at this time, but it was definitely not "moribund". Bunting did not see it as a duty of the Communist Party to revive it. On the contrary he believed in a pragmatic approach to the question of the "native nationalist movement... [to which] we pay a good deal of attention... and whenever we see any life in it we apply the United Front tactics".²⁷

Bunting over-estimated the revolutionary potential of the white workers. He expressed fears that the Comintern resolution could be a cause for pogroms between black and white workers. Like Roy at the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920 he did not see the need for stages in a colonial revolution. He believed that in the African colonies there was only one question: to organise the peasants and workers and to lead them to revolution and the establishment of Soviet Republics.²⁸ But the question arises: who was to establish "Soviet Republics" when the African working class was still in its formative stage consisting mainly of ruined peasants, and in some colonies it was simply non-existent? Bunting came to these conclusions because he misunderstood the whole question of the relationship between the class question and the national question; to him class struggle and national liberation struggle were identical, so were the goals and methods of struggle. He said:

"But in another way the class struggle is here practically coincident and simultaneous with the national struggle. The object is the same in each case — the removal of all oppression and the gaining of liberation and power for workers and peasants; the parties are substantially the same, and the weapons and methods of the struggle also".²⁹

The problems relating to South Africa and especially the line pursued by the Communist Party of South Africa left many participants at the Comintern Congress uneasy. In his closing remarks on the national and colonial question Otto Kuusinen expressed the feelings of many Congress delegates when he said:

"We must specially examine the question of South Africa in the Commission. I believe, we must tell the majority of the leadership of the South African Party that they must definitely correct their position and give up their opposition to the question of the slogan of the Native Republic."³⁰

Bennet (his real name was Petrovsky), agreeing with Kuusinen that this question must be re-discussed by the Commission, added that the line of the Communist Party of South Africa was so wrong that it had become necessary that changes be introduced.

The resolution on South Africa adopted at the meeting of the Political Secretariat of ECCI on 19 October 1928 emphasised the colonial character of South Africa and worked out the tasks of the Party which included reorganisation.

(To be continued in the next issue of *The African Communist*)

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(continued on page 92)

Wilton Mkwayi: A Veteran of Revolutionary Campaigns

by Sisa Majola

The South African liberation struggle has been enriched by the release of leaders such as Wilton Mkwayi, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1964 following his arrest immediately after the Rivonia trial.

A LEADING MEMBER OF THE ANC, SACTU and Umkhonto We Sizwe, Mkwayi has consistently stood for the ideals for which he was arrested, defended them in court, and is today propagating them freely in South Africa among a generation of revolutionaries who were not even born when he went to prison. His name has become a symbol of indomitable resistance to apartheid oppression and exploitation.

Early Years

Mkwayi's leadership qualities were not the product of spontaneous combustion, nor did his name and reputation suddenly emerge as a consequence of the goodwill of the media. His whole adult life has been one of struggle side by side with the oppressed people, in their community and work places, during the course of which he not only came to understand their aspirations but also discovered in himself the capacity to channel the realisation of those aspirations.

"I was born in the rural area of Middledrift, but I grew up in the Keiskamahoe district, where I went to school as far as standard four", he related in an exclusive interview. "At home, it was only my sister and myself who went to school. My parents never saw the door of a classroom."

In 1940, the land on which they were living was taken away by the government and his family was moved from the Middledrift district and had to make a new home elsewhere. Most probably through anger, his father made him a member of the ANC at the age of 17, sending the card to him whilst he was at school. His father was himself a member of the ANC and he thought it only right that his son should also be a member.

This territorial displacement also affected Wilton's chances of furthering his education. His father was poor and could not afford the money to send him to school. As a result, he ended up working as a labourer for extremely low wages. At the end of 1943 he went to Cape Town to look for work, and was employed in a dynamite factory as an "office boy" until 1945. He was getting £6 a month. In 1945 his mother died, and Wilton went home for her funeral.

He did not return to Cape Town, but went instead to Port Elizabeth, where he found work as a sorter in the Railways and Harbours from 1947 to 1950. At the beginning of 1950 he joined the Port Elizabeth branch of the Metal Box company where he worked until 1952 when he lost his job following a strike. Thereafter he was employed by Tin Plate Stores. Together with others, Mkwai formed what was then called the Tin Workers' Union.

By this time his trade union activities as well as his interest in the ANC had matured. Unlike in 1940, when his father made him a member of the ANC, a period which he regards as one of "paper membership", on his arrival in Port Elizabeth he became a conscious and active member of the ANC and took part in the 1947 rent campaign and bus boycotts.

The transition to active membership was brought about by his encounter with two persons, Raymond Mhlaba (with whom he went for military training in China as well as served life imprisonment later on Robben Island) and Gladstone Tshume (who died in the 1950s).

"As a rural somebody", he says, "I could not read English. I could not read newspapers. It was these two men who used to discuss with me and taught me how to read the English papers. And I found myself reading. I also found myself listened to, even by them. For example, when there was a leaflet or pamphlet on any campaign, they would call me, discuss with me, and seek my opinions and suggestions. On several occasions I found that some of the points I had raised with them were carried out in practice. But the fact that



Wilton Mkwayi.

they took my views seriously encouraged me to seek further understanding of the English language as well as how to write”.

The Fighting Fifties

Mkwayi campaigned in the 1950 June strike following the killing of workers who were shot while observing the May Day strike in the Transvaal. By this time it had become clear to him that, unless people placed both their feet in the struggle, there was no way in which it could be developed to register the seriousness of the oppressed people's opposition to the government. Thus, when the ANC began the Defiance Campaign in 1952, Mkwayi was among the group which constituted its volunteer corps, and in 1953 became the volunteer-in-chief in the Eastern Cape.

Prominent among the workers who formed the bulk of the ANC membership in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage, Mkwayi was subsequently elected into leadership positions within both the trade union movement and the ANC. During the same year in which he became the volunteer-in-chief for the Eastern Cape, he became the organising secretary of the African Textile Workers' Industrial Union of South Africa (Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage branch). During the same period he was elected treasurer of the ANC both at the New Brighton branch level and for the Eastern Cape as a region. He remained equally active within the ANC Youth League, where he also held executive office.

In 1954 he campaigned against Bantu Education as well as against the Bantu Authorities. The following year, 1955, he became the Treasurer of SACTU after it was formed. And although he himself did not go to the Congress of the People which adopted the Freedom Charter, he was very active in all its pre-launch campaigns. It was precisely his organising activities on the ground which led to his inclusion among the 156 leaders who were arrested and charged with High Treason in 1956.

Speaking in court during his trial, Mkwayi said:

“The treason in the eyes of the government was that we wanted a say in our own country. We had not declared that the white man should be thrown into the sea which would have been an easy but irresponsible slogan. We had declared that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, white, black, coloureds and Indians.”

When some accused were released at the end of the State's case, Mkwayi was among the thirty who remained until the end of the trial.

1960 State of Emergency

When the state of emergency was declared at the end of March 1960, Mkwayi went underground. He left the country and went abroad on a trade

union mission during which he visited many European and a few African countries explaining the difficulties of African workers and the laws against their trade unions. He also campaigned for financial assistance for the trade unions. This work, however, did not convince him that by itself it could bring about the revolutionary transformation of South Africa. The best way, he told himself, was to come back "to my beloved country to fight side by side with my people and my leaders".

This conclusion led him to the realisation that he was not trained militarily, a matter that was of crucial significance in the then unfolding political situation. The Sharpeville massacre had just occurred, and as in the past, the South African government had demonstrated that it was the gun that was the symbol of the centuries-old oppression. Unless the oppressed learned to use this same weapon, and not rely only on protests and deputations, Mkwayi felt there was no way in which the situation could change to the betterment of the conditions of black people. Before coming back to South Africa, therefore, he went for military training in China.

For him, this decision was quite rational:

"I felt that I must have this military training so that I too could fight for my country if necessary. After all in South Africa white women, and boys and girls of 16, are taught to handle small arms. I felt it an imperative duty to come back to South Africa and to actively participate in that work that my leaders had started. I came back convinced that the aims and objects expressed by our leader, Nelson Mandela, were the only just basis for a solution to the problems of our country".

On his return to South Africa he went to live at the Rivonia farm where Umkhonto We Sizwe had established its headquarters near Johannesburg. On the day when the police raided the farm and arrested Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Ahmed Kathrada and Denis Goldberg, Mkwayi had actually been on the farm but managed to evade the arrest. Pretending to be a herdsman, and dressed in overalls, he drove a few cattle he found on the farm and passed through the police net quite inconspicuously. And although he knew that from that moment he was a wanted person, and that life in the South African underground was going to be dangerous, he was nevertheless determined not to leave the country. He felt that his services were needed more inside, during the armed campaign, than outside, where the mobilisation of the international community for the isolation of the apartheid government was in full swing.

Arrest and Trial

Wilton Mkwayi was betrayed by Bartholomew Hlapane. This notorious spy of the South African government had been in some leadership structures of

the liberation movement, as he himself often boasted during trials where he gave evidence for the state against the freedom fighters.

On a number of occasions Mkwai had come to the conclusion that something was wrong with Hlapane, although he did not at that stage think that he was cooperating with the police. But when on several appointments with him he found that disguised police were moving about, he began to suspect that this "gentleman" was a traitor. He tested this several times, and each time discovered that the police had been informed of his appointment with Hlapane.

On the run, Mkwai's life was that of a fugitive. He changed disguises, becoming a priest one day and something else the next day. His movements were only curtailed when he was accidentally shot in the leg during an incident of gang warfare. He himself was not involved, but was merely a passer-by. A stray bullet hit him and led to his seeking medical assistance from a nurse, who later became his wife.

By this time Mkwai had done a lot of organisational work for Umkhonto We Sizwe. He had travelled throughout the country and co-ordinated the activities of all regional structures in order to patch up what the Rivonia arrests had torn apart.

The organisation of Umkhonto We Sizwe, however, came up against several problems, the main one being the fact that all its leading personnel were known to the police as active members of the ANC. Even without the use of spies like Bartholomew Hlapane and Bruno Mtolo, it was highly likely that the first police suspects in the event of a guerrilla war developing would be these key ANC members. The work of the police was only facilitated by the treacherous conduct of persons like Hlapane.

Ultimately, the police caught Mkwai. Later they placed him in a window where Hlapane was instructed to identify him. Mkwai shook the police by telling them that the whole exercise was useless since he (Mkwai) knew exactly who had betrayed him and who it was that was to identify him from the window. Police attempts to defend Hlapane were of course exposed when the traitor appeared in court to give evidence against his own former comrades. Charged with Wilton Mkwai were Chiba, Maharaj, Matthews and Kitson.

Standing in dignity and looking straight at the white judge who was presiding over their trial, Mkwai declared:

"The charges that have been brought against me and my fellow accused arise from our desire to fight for the liberation of the people of South Africa from the tyranny of racial discrimination. My leaders have time and again explained and

exposed the injustice done to my people. I am a Mandela man. I share his hatred of the laws which are destroying the life and soul of my people. I share his hatred of the system of racial discrimination. Our goal is and has always been that all people in South Africa should live in harmony and equality and this can only be achieved by the extension of the vote to all the people of South Africa regardless of their colour or sex..."

Mkwayi, as the first accused, was sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island, where he joined his Rivonia colleagues.

Implication of their Release

The struggles and pressures that were mounted internationally as well as in South Africa and within the very prison walls for the unconditional release of all political prisoners can indeed be said to have triumphed. Not only has the apartheid regime yielded to this pressure by releasing the most famous of these prisoners, but the signing on May 4, 1990, of an agreement with the leadership of the African National Congress in Cape Town is perhaps the most dramatic political event in the history of South Africa.

Without underestimating the obstacles that still lie on the way, it can be said that South Africa has reached a point of no return in the march of the revolution towards people's power. The sacrifices of people like Wilton Mkwayi and thousands of those who lost their lives in the struggle were the guiding compass which showed the direction towards a South Africa without oppression and exploitation.

Progress is the law of life.

— *Robert Browning, Paracelsus, 1835*

Marxism and the Language Issue

by T. Halloran

Like a long-suppressed urge, a profound and profoundly troubling issue is beginning to emerge and to be debated within the National Liberation Movement in general and inside the ranks of the African National Congress in particular.

IT IS THIS: HOW ARE WE IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA to cope with the fact that ours is not a unilingual country; that, on the contrary, our compatriots speak Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Tswana, Venda, Afrikaans, English, Gujarati and Hindi, to name only nine of the major language groupings? How are we to do justice to this diversity in the schools, courts and legislative bodies without destroying that unity on which our very claim to *be* a nation, as enshrined in the preamble to the Freedom Charter, is based? What are we, members of the national liberation movement, going to do to preserve the indigenous languages spoken by the overwhelming majority of our people side by side with the languages of European origin so vital for providing access to the technical, scientific and cultural resources without which no modern nation-state can hope to survive?

For decades such questions were not intensively canvassed within the ANC. Even the *Freedom Charter* devotes only a single sentence to the matter, declaring simply that all people shall have the right to use their own language¹. The South African Communist Party's 1962 programme, *The Road to South African Freedom*, does mention in its Introduction the fact that "African languages are despised (by the white supremacists) and

undeveloped"², but the matter is left there and is not discussed at all in the Party's new 1989 programme, *The Path to Power*. Although, in recent times, seminars and discussions have been held on the language question, it remains true that no genuinely in-depth study has been produced by the ANC or the SACP on this topic, thus creating the dangerous impression that we believe that the many intricate problems connected with it will simply resolve themselves.

The reasons for this silence are obvious and, in a sense, understandable. Like every other liberation movement on the continent, the ANC and its allies had to fight tribalism, regionalism and factionalism in order to present a united front to the common enemy. This was particularly so in our case. Decades of illegality, the enormous concentration of the enemy's resources within the special type of a colony he had created, the powerful international support for the apartheid regime, all combined to dictate that, for the struggling South African masses, unity in action was everything and any source of possible division in our ranks had to be avoided like the most virulent of plagues.

It was the Nationalist government and its ideologues who made use of the old imperialist slogan of divide and rule. It was they who sought to introduce racial and cultural divisions into every facet of the country's life from the economic to the sexual, no matter what the cost in human lives and human misery. Their ideal of diversity, thus, was and remains anathema to every opponent of apartheid.

Many of these conditions are still in place and will not disappear until the demise of the apartheid system itself. It is undeniable, however, that the Movement and the nation have entered a period of rapid and profound transition. In terms of our own analyses, we are poised for the seizure of power. In this new situation, a deeper examination of the language issue can no longer be avoided. It is unavoidable at the level of political strategy and tactics because we can no longer afford to allow the inheritors of Verwoerdian thinking in the Nationalist and Conservative Parties to parade themselves as the only politicians who care about language rights and respect linguistic diversity. We must capture the ideological high ground by presenting policies which will genuinely guarantee the conservation of *all* languages and dialects spoken in our country.

Moreover, the problems of language preservation are unavoidable because, as a matter of objective historical fact, the indigenous languages of our country, like those of most of Africa and, indeed most of the post-colonial world, are threatened with eventual extinction by the hegemony of the

metropolitan languages of the imperialist and capitalist world. A frightening example of this linguistic genocide in the Pacific has been thrown into relief by Peter Mühlhäusler³, who has shown how no fewer than 40 Polynesian languages, 50 Micronesian and 250 Australian indigenous languages have either been altogether extinguished or are rapidly falling into disuse as a result of colonial oppression and the post-colonial dominance of English.

Closer to home, we have the example of the destruction of the languages of the ancient Xhosi-Saan peoples and Milner's efforts to eliminate Afrikaans. It may well turn out to be the case that the progressive features of the struggle to preserve Afrikaans have lessons to teach us in language struggles yet to come.

Marx's Contribution

Communists have special reason to welcome the opening up of this new field of struggle and debate. Within the broad Marxist tradition there has always been a powerful current of interest in fundamental problems connected with language. This is, in itself, hardly surprising, since no social philosopher from Plato down to Locke and Rousseau has been able to avoid speculation concerning the origin and function of language and its role in human affairs. However, Marxist linguistic thought deserves special attention on two counts. Firstly, what Marx and some Marxists have had to say about language displays important affinities with conclusions reached by researchers — notably the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski and the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein — who would not have described themselves as Marxists. Secondly, this approach is especially germane to the topic of linguistic diversity as it occurs in South Africa because it treats language as being inseparably bound up with real human practices and social contexts.

Marx himself saw an analogy between language acquisition and the processes which typify social transformation. Thus in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* he compares the often regressive behaviour of political actors in revolutionary situations, their struggles to adapt to totally changed historical circumstances, to the obstacles encountered by someone learning a new language:

"In like manner, a beginner who has learned a new language always translates it back into his mother tongue, but he has assimilated the spirit of the new language and can freely express himself in it only when he finds his way in it without recalling the old and forgets his native tongue in the use of the new."⁴

Marx's employment of this simile is, it seems to me, suggestive of the following thought: To speak and understand a given language *just is* to enter in to the network of rule-governed practices which constitutes a specific social formation at a definite stage of its development. Finding one's way through the labyrinth of a grammar is not merely a precondition for finding one's feet within the speech community in which that grammar holds sway; it *is* to have found one's feet there. Of course 'versatility in' and 'understanding of' a language or a society are gradeable terms. There are degrees of linguistic versatility, just as there are degrees of social adaptability. But this consideration does no damage to the notion that learning a language is tied in with the business of learning to live a full life as a social being.

It was his clear-sighted adherence to this dialectical perspective on the relation between language and cognition which led the Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky to develop an account of concept-formation which is in fact an explicit formulation of notions already implicit in Marx's analogy between language-learning and social change. Speech, Vygotsky argues, has its origins in the social setting in which the infant learns to speak. The child's early use of what Vygotsky termed "word-meaning" units is at first entirely directed to serve affective ends and elementary social functions. Only with the passage of time does it come to have self-directive features which are eventually transformed into internalised verbal thought. Obviously these findings, if correct, have implications which point well beyond the sphere of child-psychology and it is equally obvious that Vygotsky realised this. He concludes his *Thought and Language* with this remark:

Thought and language, which reflect reality in a way different from that of perception, are the key to the nature of human consciousness. Words play a central part not only in the development of thought but in the historical growth of consciousness as a whole. A word is a microcosm of human consciousness."⁵

Stalinist dogmatism saw to the suppression of *Thought and Language* in 1936, two years after its first publication, and it did not reappear until 1956. By that time, however, Wittgenstein's philosophical self-critisms in the form of the *Philosophical Investigations* — a work which seems to have been partially influenced by Marxist perspectives — had made their appearance. Wittgenstein's attempt to provide a descriptive overview of language provided both an independent echo and a development of Vygotsky's insights, summed up in the famous precept "to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life."⁶

Now this phrase, 'form of life' is the key to much that is revolutionary and (from a Marxist viewpoint) correct in Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language. As Hegel and the young Marx had once held that history was governed by an inner logical essence, so Wittgenstein argued in his first great work, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, that language was uniformly governed by such an essence — its "logical form". Just as Marx, in such works as the *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*, criticised his own earlier version of the same dogma. In doing this, Wittgenstein was not of course trying to "abolish logic". But he was trying to abolish the idealist conception of logical form as a kind of universal medium of thought, because the idea that language is governed by such a medium does violence to the immense variety of signing practices, ways of meaning, we find within any given language and between different languages.

The term '*lebensform*' thus comes in the later work to do duty for the notion of 'logical form'. The former expression was used by Wittgenstein to mean the material and spiritual culture of any given speech-community, and in saying that imagining a language entailed imagination of a *lebensform*, he was positing an internal relationship between the ways of life of diverse communities and their means of communication.

What is the relevance of all this to the concrete problem of the politics of language as it confronts our Party in the South African setting? It is this: Once we take seriously the precept that the meanings of the expressions which comprise a specific language are tied to the shared historical experience of the speakers of that language, we are compelled to take equally seriously the fact that the historical experience of South Africa's speech communities converges at some points and diverges sharply at others, so that the possibilities of understanding and of misunderstanding one another co-exist and must co-exist so long as linguistic diversity is maintained and respected.

For instance, 'umkhonto' and 'spear' are words in two South African languages which ostensibly denote the same object. But are the *meanings* of the two words unproblematically the same? Spears have a rather different place in the history of the evolution of weaponry as it occurs among colonised peoples than is the case with those who colonised them. To the colonisers they represent resistance to "progress", while the colonised see them as instruments of legitimate defence. The conceptual, as opposed to the emotive, difference this circumstance makes may turn out to be important — as in the case where members of different language-groups are debating a defence budget in a common legislature — or it may turn out to be trivial.

The point is only that the potential for misunderstanding is present in the situation in a way in which it would not be had the dissimilarities in the historical experience of South African speech-communities not been as they are.

Self-evidently, what pertains to discourse about everyday implements and objects must apply to political discourse as well. It is not clear, for example, that the politically charged expressions 'inkululeko', 'vryheid' and 'freedom' translate into one another without remainder. In fact, given the very different political history of the communities who use one or another of these words in their mother-tongue, this is unlikely to be the case. It will not do, either, to respond to this difficulty by saying that what is lost in translation is so miniscule as to make no difference. For it can always be asked, "To *whom* does it make no difference?" There is a grave political risk in supposing that it will always be a matter of indifference to native-speakers of one of the languages involved.

The problems these culturo-linguistic differences generate have been suppressed by precisely those apologists for apartheid who profess to be taking them chiefly into account. What apartheid has meant in practice has been the dominion of two "official" European languages over the multilingual life-world of the oppressed majority of South Africans. Unsurprisingly, this has resulted in a "crisis of identity" among speakers of those "official" languages who are, after all, Africans.

Unity in Diversity

If the struggle for national liberation is to fulfill the whole, and not merely a part, of its promise, then it is clear that this cultural and linguistic imperialism and this identity-crisis must be ended. A united, democratic and non-racial South Africa will no more be able to afford citizens who feel that the tongue most familiar to them has been relegated to some inferior backwater than it will be able to tolerate the self-doubtings of those who wonder whether their spiritual home does not truly lie in the country or on the continent from which their native language was imported. The unity we seek will have to be brought about through the cultivation and flourishing of linguistic diversity and not in spite of it, because the history of our country is a fabric comprised of many different strands.

To Marxists it can never seem that a unity of this sort can be achieved through legal safeguards alone, however important these may turn out to be. Laws, whatever their intention, must be framed in particular languages and their interpretation too is a linguistic affair. In post-apartheid South Africa,

the constitutional guarantees of the population's language rights will be part of a superstructural legal framework which, like any such framework, will rest on an economic infrastructure, on forces and relations of production which determine how people produce and reproduce their life. If the language of a people cannot be divorced from the particularities of their cultural life, then it can surely not be separated from their economic life either. As the economics of colonialism determined that Eurocentric languages and values should be imported into South Africa, just as the technology which ran the gold and diamond mines was imported, so economics will, in the last resort, determine how the South African language question is finally settled.

We cannot, therefore, avoid questions as to whether the flourishing of all South African languages will be possible in a dispensation in which culture-blind market forces are allowed uninhibited free play and are not counter-balanced by rational economic planning and a measure of control by a democratically elected legislature which takes the cultural needs of the whole population into account. It is undeniable that rampant capitalism of the Friedmanian variety would prioritise the allocation of educational and other resources in a way which would disadvantage the developmental needs of indigenous languages and cultures. Nor can we blind ourselves to the fact that a certain kind of emphasis on technological and scientific disciplines to the detriment of cultural studies and scholarship would favour English in a way which could well prove disastrous for our country's linguistic ecology.

The intricacies of the South African language issue cannot, it seems, be kept apart from the complexities of the debate about the country's political and economic future. This is, perhaps, why our Movement and Party have delayed in-depth consideration of the question for so long. But it is all the more reason why we should apply our minds to it now.

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Why I read “The African Communist”

by Mantoa Nompikazi

Among other concepts carelessly thrown up by the era of Black Consciousness in the 70s was the concept or thesis of Black Communalism. At that time being amongst the well-intentioned if ill-informed enthusiasts and believers in the blackness teachings, I knew what black communalism meant and I can remember the all-night debates on the 30 points of black communalism, but unfortunately now, twenty years later I can hardly remember these.

I CAN ONLY TRY TO SUMMARISE BLACK COMMUNALISM as an attempt to reject capitalism, modify scientific socialism, upgrade the primitive communism and ultimately hopefully create a supposedly scientific model of African Socialism.

When, inevitably, the time came for me to join the ANC in exile, not only was I swimming in this unfortunate confusion of the concept of Black Communalism, but I was convinced, thanks to all sorts of indoctrination, that the SACP was not only using the ANC for its hidden agenda, but was also itself a front for ‘Russia’ which wanted to import into Africa its own unworkable version of Communism.

I grudgingly, but voluntarily, joined the ANC as obviously there was no other political home for any person interested in a democratic transformation in SA. I was sure I would work “from inside” to also expose the hidden agenda of the Communist Party and would opt out at the first signs that the ANC was incapable of correctly leading our people in their struggle to liberate South Africa. One of the first things I was convinced I had

to do in my "private mission" to expose the communist ploy was to read everything about communism and the SACP so as to wake up the sleeping ANC members and their leadership to the imminent danger of being hijacked or used by these Communists. Wading through *The Communist Manifesto*, *Das Capital*, *Antidühring* etc, I emerged a few months later a near wreck mentally.

Much later I discovered Dialego and was introduced to *The African Communist* (which was, incidentally, very scarce in that region then). What a discovery! Some of the first articles I read were the 'Two Pillars of Struggle' outlining the Alliance; several of Nyameko's articles on Trade Unionism especially after the FOSATU controversies; an article on Black Consciousness by Toussaint, an article on the Freedom Charter and many others. While I cannot claim the I-lived-happily-ever-after-feeling, I can honestly claim a profound change in me and my perspectives on many issues. The political education programme of the ANC was definitely being reinforced through my reading of the AC.

The AC to me therefore is and has always been a political educator. I am one of those who are not generously endowed with the intellectual capacity and most of the time spend sleepless nights muddling through difficult (to me) scientific theories. However, my sanity is saved by reading AC which does explain with a simple scientific approach these seemingly difficult scientific theories and concepts and above all it tackles the bread and butter issues in our country.

The era of the "why I joined the SACP" articles fortified me in my education journey as I had often wondered what type of people joined the Party and how they made it there. These communists simply spoke about themselves through the AC. They seemed ordinary people just like me — except of course for their undoubted commitment, dedication and capabilities. It is the same AC that brought people who to me had always been far off, like the Vietnamese, Russians, Cubans, etc nearer and taught me about their struggles. The article on 60 years of the Great October Socialist Revolution was to me a revelation. It must be remembered I was still in my very first country of exile and it was to take me three years to fly out to see these foreign lands and people. My knowledge about Africa and its politics was of course as limited as everything else and thanks to the "Africa Notes and Comment" I was seriously initiated into these complicated politics of Africa.

I, like many cadres, I am sure, have my "low" and "up" moments and sometimes I lose step and analyse wrongly but AC always acts as a guide on

many issues. Of course I always felt and still feel that more could still be done — like timeously addressing issues e.g. what is currently happening in Eastern Europe; or coming out more frequently on the issue of women and women's emancipation etc.

Reading, translating and understanding the writings in the *AC* does not require attendance in the prominent Party Schools. After all *AC* has to be a forum for all Marxist-Leninists in Africa amongst whom are the African working class in SA, that heroic class that has had little opportunity to stay in class long enough. For the SA fighting people it has in simple terms to explain why the working class has to be in the forefront of struggle, the relationship between their national oppression and class exploitation, and the relationship in the struggles to eradicate both. In a few pages, in understandable language, the *AC* has to be the Political School, has to translate Marxist-Leninist theories into living practice and arm our people in their daily battles against the hated enemy. From my own experience I can say that the *AC* does manage to do all these and above all, it guides all of us through the mined road to freedom.

All comrades responsible for the success of *AC* — from the contributors to the printers, indeed every one of them must be saluted for a job well done as we celebrate the 30 years of *AC*.



KWAME NKRUMAH – Fighter For National Liberation, Peace and Social Progress

by Explo Nani Kufi

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah has gone down in world history as an important leader in the struggle for national liberation, peace and social progress. Today, two and a half decades after his overthrow as the president of the Republic of Ghana, his ideas and performance in office have become the motive forces of mobilisation of the masses of the Ghanaian people and the organisation of the working class and its allies.

IN GHANA, HIS NAME IS SYNONYMOUS with the progressive tendency in politics. The broad left movement in Ghana and the African progressive community continue to draw a lot of inspiration from Nkrumah. His declaration that the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked to the total liberation of the African continent, and his total commitment to and practical support for this cause, have secured him recognition as a leader of progressive forces, not only in Ghana, but in Africa as a whole.

Nkrumah was born on September 21, 1909 in the small village of Nkroful in the Western Region of Ghana, in the family of a poor goldsmith. He trained as a teacher and at the age of 25 left for the USA. There he studied in Lincoln and Pennsylvania Universities. In 1945 Nkrumah left the USA to study law

in Britain but devoted his time to working for Africa's liberation. He returned to Ghana (then the Gold Coast) to play an active role in the national liberation movement and led the people of Ghana to independence, ending British colonial rule and becoming the prime minister and later president of Ghana.

He was overthrown by a CIA-sponsored coup led by reactionary officers in the Armed Forces and the Police in Ghana on February 24, 1966. After the coup he settled in Guinea, where he was made co-president by president Ahmed Sekou Toure. He died on April 27, 1972 whilst under medical treatment in Romania.

Pan-Africanism and National Liberation

Arising from his concern for the independence and freedom of the African people, Nkrumah made efforts to link up with Pan-Africanists when he was in the US between 1943 and 1945. One of his closest associates during the period was C.L.R. James, a renowned historian and Pan-African activist. Nkrumah met George Padmore, a Trinidad-born veteran of Pan-Africanism, upon arrival in London in May 1945. He was introduced to George Padmore by C.L.R. James. At the time, the Pan-African federation, headed by Padmore, was busy preparing for the fifth Pan-African Congress held in Manchester in 1945.

Nkrumah became involved in the activities of the federation within a month of arrival in London. He worked with Padmore as joint secretaries of the organisation Committee, sending invitations to organisations and individuals throughout Africa and the black diaspora. They explained the aims of the Congress and the political tactics that should be adopted to achieve liberation in the colonies.

Nkrumah introduced a resolution at the conference which was adopted and is included in the Congress' "Declaration to the Colonial Peoples of the World". The resolution read: "Today, there is only one road to effective action — the organisation of the masses." This manifests Nkrumah's confidence in the masses, quite opposite to the elitist elements who were also involved in the national liberation movement of the period.

Nkrumah devoted all his attention to the organisation of a Pan-African approach to decolonisation. He became the head of the West African National Secretariat with renowned Marxist I.T.A. Wallace Johnson from Sierra Leone as the secretary. He argued that nationalism must be organised on a regional basis if it was to defeat colonialism and sustain itself beyond the

date of independence. He was worried about the type of nationalism that would eventually militate against Pan-Africanism and African Unity. He saw this as a great danger.

In 1946 he was convinced that all measures must be used to destroy the concept of sovereignty based on colonial boundaries. This conviction led him to travel to Paris to convince the Africans of the French community, many of whom were deputies in the French Assembly. These included Leopold Senghor, Lamine Guere, Felix Houphouet-Boigny and others. They received the idea of co-ordinated nationalist agitation warmly, and further developed with him and accepted the idea of organising a movement for a Union of West African Socialist Republics.

Threatened by Nkrumah's move, the French government made some constitutional concessions to the French community African leaders.

Towards Ghana's Independence

Nkrumah was busy preparing for the West African National Conference to be held in Nigeria in 1948 when Ako Adjei made a proposal for him to come back to Ghana (then the Gold Coast) to assume the job of general secretary of the newly formed United Gold Coast Convention (U.G.C.C.). After consultation with his close associates in the West African Students' Union and other friends, he decided to accept the call from the UGCC, and in November 1947, he set sail for Ghana.

Before Nkrumah's arrival in the Gold Coast, the UGCC was an organisation which expressed the desires of the doctors, lawyers, small businessmen and the black middle classes of the country. These people did not want to be bothered with the hard work of organising a political party. They therefore wanted to have someone doing the job of running round whilst they concentrated on their professional schedule whilst maintaining executive positions.

Nkrumah's confidence in the masses, as reflected in his positions at the Pan-African conference, geared him on to resort to actual mass mobilisation work. This changed the character of the Convention as people joined by the thousands. He travelled ceaselessly in urban and rural areas, and the organisers followed him.

Nkrumah taught the people of the Gold Coast that the struggle for political emancipation from imperialist domination was a way of life and not something that they did in their spare time. The youth in particular became attracted to the movement when it assumed this new character. Teachers

and students who demonstrated against the arrest of Nkrumah and others after the 1948 riots were expelled by the authorities.

Nkrumah proposed the formation of a secondary school for these students. The school was established at Cape Coast and was run by the expelled teachers independently of the British colonial government. The effect of this was the flourishing of more schools across the country. The people subscribed, chiefs appropriated land, teachers worked for small salaries and the nation that was to become Ghana sprang into being.

Noting the vital role of the press in the struggle, he founded the *Accra Evening News* in September 1948. This became the foundation of the national press, which was a powerful means of mobilising the people of Gold Coast. In January 1949 emerged a daily *The Morning Telegraph* of Sekondi, followed by *The Daily Mail* of Cape Coast. These papers attained an unbelievable reputation. Printed copies were seldom enough to meet the public demand. *The Accra Evening News* in particular was besieged by news vendors. According to the editors if they had facilities to print they could have sold 50,000 copies a day in Accra, a town then with a population of 150,000 people, of whom a large proportion were illiterate. Copies were passed on from hand to hand.

In this way, Nkrumah mobilised the people of the Gold Coast against British imperialism, laying the foundation for ultimate independence and freedom.

Earlier in 1948, a countrywide boycott of European and Syrian merchants had been called by a sub-chief of the Ga state, Nii Kwabena Bonne. This was an attempt to force foreign shopkeepers to reduce the high prices of goods. The boycott spread quickly and lasted about a month. The boycott was called off on February 28, 1948.

Coincidentally the Ex-Servicemen's Union went on a demonstration in the course of which the colonial police murdered two ex-servicemen and five others were wounded. This was followed by widespread rioting and looting in Accra for several days, during which twenty people were killed and 237 injured. The Governor declared a state of emergency. Shortly afterwards the colonial authorities arrested the "Big Six" of the UGCC, as they had come to be called: J.B. Danquah, William Ofori Atta, E. Akuffo Addo, Ernest Ako Adjei, Obetsebi Lamphey and Kwame Nkrumah. They appeared before a Commission set up by the Governor to inquire into the disturbances. In its unpublished report, the Commission stated:

"It is significant that, although from his evidence it must be plain that Mr Nkrumah has not really departed one jot from his avowed aim for a Union of West African Soviet Socialist Republics, the Convention has not so far taken any steps to dissociate themselves from him."

Nkrumah insisted that the word "Soviet" was inserted by the Commissioners and was not included in "the Circle document" found with him.

Strained Relations

He returned to his work as general secretary of the UGCC but relations worsened between him and the working committee. The committee objected to his founding the Ghana National College to accommodate those students who had gone on strike and had been expelled when they were arrested. They also objected to the formation of the Youth Study Group and his steps towards establishing a newspaper. A split became inevitable resulting in a decision at a special conference at Tarkwa in June 1949 to break away from the UGCC and form a political party quite separate from it, called the Convention People's Party (CPP). This was to be a mass-based, disciplined party pursuing policies of scientific socialism, with its immediate task to obtain "Self Government NOW". There was to be no tribalism or radicalism within the CPP. The CPP was launched in Accra on Sunday June 12, 1949 before a crowd of about 60,000 people to whom Nkrumah declared

"The time has arrived when a definite line of action must be taken if we are going to save our country from continued imperialist exploitation and oppression"³

The time had come for the CPP to call for what Nkrumah termed "Positive Action" — a general strike of the whole nation against British rule. It brought the administration of British rule into serious crisis, to which the colonial authorities responded by putting Nkrumah into prison.

He contested elections whilst in prison, and 22,780 out of an electorate of 23,122 voted for Nkrumah. Consequently he was led from prison to become Leader of Government Business in 1951.

Economic Reconstruction and Social Progress

Pan-Africanism and African Unity were Nkrumah's top priorities when, on the day of Ghana's independence, as prime minister he declared that the independence of Ghana was insecure and meaningless unless it was linked to

the total liberation of the African continent. The significance of Ghana's independence, won on March 6, 1957, went far beyond the borders of Ghana and beyond the personality of Nkrumah. He organised and hosted two major conferences in Accra in 1958. In April 1958 he assembled representatives of the then independent African states. The second conference was the first All-African People's Conference attended by representatives of 62 African Nationalist groups throughout non-independent Africa in December 1958. This was convened to discuss methods to achieve the total liberation and unity of the continent.

He pursued the question of Africa's unification further through the establishment of the Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union as a nucleus for a proposed Union of African States; the secret agreement on the federation of Ghana and the then Congo Kinshasa (now Zaire); the Casablanca Group, and finally as one of the founding fathers of the Organisation of African Unity.

Nkrumah gave assistance to various liberation movements which were based in Ghana. Many leading figures of later independent African countries lived in Ghana during this period. He pursued the idea of an African High Command and also placed positive backing for the liberation movements in Southern Africa in the centre stage of OAU affairs.

He did not limit himself to Africa. He convened the international conference on "The World Without the Bomb", and played a leading role in the Non-Aligned Movement. His policy of positive non-alignment, his support for an end to the US bombing of Vietnam and for peace through negotiations, and for measures to secure genuine disarmament and a reduction of world tension constituted a genuine contribution to the cause of world peace. It was while he was on one of such peace missions to Hanoi that the C.I.A. manipulated military and police officers to take advantage of his absence and remove him from power.

Marxism as a Tool

At home Nkrumah directed his attention to the building of a strong industrial economy whose benefits would go beyond Ghana's territorial boundaries. He also urged Africans to use Marxism as a tool to understand the past and chart the course of future social development.

When Ghana became independent in 1957 she had all the features of a colony in the sphere of her economy. She was mainly a producer of raw materials like cocoa, along with timber, palm oil, gold, diamonds, bauxite and manganese. The production of these commodities was not guided by Ghana's internal needs but for export in their raw state, for processing and for the benefit of industry and commerce in the west. Ghana's mineral wealth was

dominated by big British and other western monopolies. Agricultural wealth, produced by individual peasant producers, was purchased cheaply by the big British trading monopolies, such as UAC, a subsidiary of the giant firm Unilever.

In the field of health significant progress was made in the provision of hospitals, clinics and health facilities, and the training of doctors, midwives, nurses and dispensers. The expansion of educational facilities and the changing of the whole pattern of education, were amongst the most outstanding of the achievements of the Nkrumah regime. Independent Ghana began to transform her economy, to end her dependence on raw materials production, to develop import substitution, to diversify her agriculture and grow more foodstuffs, and to lay the basis for industrialisation.

Central to Ghana's industrial growth is the Volta River Project, which is not to be considered simply as a means of providing hydro-electric power, but as an all-purpose scheme affecting the economy as a whole. The development of economic relations with socialist countries was undoubtedly of assistance to Ghana under Nkrumah.

Nkrumah was committed to leading Ghana in fighting off the attacks of the hostile imperialist press whilst calmly continuing her advance away from colonialism. This was to build a new independent economy, thus laying the basis, in President Nkrumah's words, of "a society in which the maxim 'from each according to his ability and to each according to his work', shall apply, and in which the condition for the development of each shall be the condition for the development of all". Kwame Nkrumah, therefore, saw that the non-capitalist road was the only way forward. He declared that socialism was the only alternative.

Nkrumah was convinced that social progress demanded a freeing of all classes and social strata from oppression. Recognising that this was possible only if all progressive sections of society were organised, he devoted efforts to organising the peasants and also the women. The Farmers' Council was the main vehicle of the organisation of the peasants. Considering the importance of the role of women in the revolutionary struggle he stressed that "the degree of a country's revolutionary awareness may be measured by the political maturity of its women".

His outstanding theoretical works include *Neo-colonialism — the last stage of imperialism*, *Class Struggle in Africa*, *Towards Colonial Freedom*, *Consciencism*, and *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare*.



AFRICA

NOTES & COMMENT

by Jabulani Mkhathshwa

NAMIBIA: THE CHALLENGES **OF INDEPENDENCE**

NAMIBIA'S INDEPENDENCE HAS BEEN classical in every respect. Despite the political gymnastics by South Africa over the years denying the colonial character of its occupation of Namibia, as well as attempting to foster its own version of independence through puppet administrations, on March 21 this year, Pretoria was forced to perform all the functions and responsibilities of a departing colonising power. The South African flag was brought down at midnight amidst shouts of "Down! Down!" from a crowd of tens of thousands of Namibians, plus 5,000 foreign guests. President De Klerk, in a speech that was as solemn as the occasion deserved, admitted that "the season for violence has passed for Namibia... and for the whole of Southern Africa."

This was an important statement given the record of South Africa's destabilisation of frontline states, and that racist aggression has been one of the main causes of their economic problems. Did this proclamation, made in full view of the international community, suggest that South Africa will not create and support counter-revolutionary groups against the SWAPO government? And did it imply that it will no longer give support to the UNITA counter-revolutionary rebels fighting the government of Angola? Time alone will tell. With our experience in Southern Africa, it would be wise to adopt an attitude of cautious optimism while the SWAPO government struggles to reconstruct the country from the ruins of the apartheid legacy.

Cautious? Indeed, because vital sections of the Namibian economy are still under South African control, not to mention Walvis Bay, which South Africa has refused to hand over to the Namibians. Walvis Bay holds the key to Namibia's independence. It is the only deep water port which can handle Namibia's trade traffic with the rest of the world. Yet South Africa maintains its army and practises apartheid there.

Peace for Namibia, as for southern Africa, becomes a meaningless cliché unless it is based on justice and respect for the territorial integrity of independent countries. Namibia needs Walvis Bay as a child needs its mother's breast. De Klerk's government may not be intending to create UNITA type vigilantes to destabilise the Namibian economy, yet its refusal to acknowledge Namibia's sovereignty over Walvis Bay amounts to a form of economic sabotage as damaging as the financing of a counter-revolutionary army.

Independent Namibia starts life with a huge debt to South African banks, estimated at R892 million, incurred by the previous puppet administration to finance the military occupation of the territory by South African soldiers.

The challenges for SWAPO are enormous. The fact that the country's population consists of fewer than 2 million citizens does not diminish the load that has to be carried by the young government, especially now that the traditional assistance to developing countries from the socialist community seems likely to be diminished if not altogether discontinued.

Conscious of these factors in mapping out its development strategy, SWAPO has not rushed to introduce an economic programme for the socialisation of the means of production, as its constitution had originally suggested. Instead, it has unveiled a realistic programme for a mixed economy, allowing joint ownership of key enterprises by the State and the multinational corporations. Some key industries, however, will be nationalised, as this is the only way in which the young government can obtain the resources necessary to correct the legacy of apartheid injustice.

In the meantime, SWAPO has said that it will maintain the South African rand as the country's currency as well as remain a member of the Southern African Customs Union Agreement (SACUA). But things will not stay that way. As soon as it has sorted out its principal financial business and secured the country on a sound economic basis, the government will advance Namibian society towards providing a greater share in the country's wealth to those who produce it. This path, as recent history has demonstrated, is not a smooth and straightforward one. Neither is it a short-cut to prosperity, but a difficult and zig-zagging path, whose end, nevertheless, remains the

liberation of Namibian society from the injustice of capitalism and its system of exploitation.

An independent Namibia will also be a great asset to the Southern African countries who for decades have been locked within apartheid South Africa's orbit. It will strengthen the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC), and with its enormous economic potential as well as infrastructure, assist in extracting their economies from apartheid dependence.

Woe to the UNITA bandits, who have up till now depended on South African supplies from Namibian territory. The existence of Namibia under a SWAPO government in the south creates a hammer and anvil situation in which UNITA will be crushed. Angola, like other southern African states, made huge sacrifices for the ultimate independence of Namibia. This was internationalism in the best meaning of the word.

LIBERIA: THE PEELING OF A BANANA REPUBLIC

SAMUEL DOE'S REGIME HAS never been confronted with such problems as have recently occurred in Liberia. In the past only peaceful protests marked the disquiet in the country. But since the beginning of 1990 the development of armed clashes has raised the level of popular protest against Doe's government to new heights.

Although it is not clear who the "rebels" are, what their political programme is and who finances them, the position taken by the US army stationed in Liberia gives a clue that they are seen by the UK administration as representing interests which are hostile to America.

Reports coming from independent sources in Liberia indicate that the US army has been involved in giving support to Doe's own forces, which have been accused by the more than 100,000 refugees who have fled to neighbouring Guinea and Sierra Leone of killing scores of Liberians and forcing thousands of others to leave the country.

The head of the US military mission, Colonel David Staley, has denied local press reports that the US is providing combat training for Liberian troops. The role of the US force, he said, was to "liaise between the Liberian Defence Ministry and the US ambassador to make sure that no Americans get hurt".

The local press in Liberia as well as the governments of the neighbouring states have called on the Bush administration to withdraw its military personnel, as the consequence of their activities has been to flood these countries with thousands of refugees.

Although Liberia has never been colonised, for a long time now Doe has been a typical Uncle Tom in Africa, tailoring his country's development to the dictates of the Washington government. Yet the people's spirit of independence was never crushed. Today Liberia's militant sons and daughters have been moved to rebellion against a military dictator who has styled himself a civilian ruler.

In March this year, Professor Togba Tipoteh led a delegation of exiled Liberians to Nigeria, where they sought assistance in waging a struggle to bring about democracy in their country. A former minister of economic development, Professor Tipoteh said that the Doe government has ensured that no aspect of democracy prevails within the country. He called on President Doe to resign and to pave the way for the setting up of an interim government to ensure free and fair elections in the country.



The Life of a Veteran

by Mthetheleli, Botswana

I DRIVE TO A VILLAGE IN BOTSWANA to meet and talk to one of the veterans of our movement and Party. Evenutally, I arrive at the house. I ask to speak to the old man, and fortunately he is there. He enters wearing a suit and tie, and comes to greet me with his hand outstretched.

Of course, as is our tradition, we inquire about each other's health. He tells me that his health is not up to scratch and the biting winter has worsened it. The old lady quickly tells the children to prepare tea. One is immediately struck by the fact that the instruction is in Xhosa. Later, I establish that the children can speak both Xhosa and Tswana, and they tell me that this is to ensure that the cord linking his family to South Africa is not cut.

We are now seated on the sofas and I introduce myself. He tells me that his name is Abel Mavandla Ntwana, and he was born in 1919 at Cala, in the Transkei. His father was the late Joel Ntwana. Abel Ntwana completed his secondary schooling at Bensonvale, in the Transkei and married Nontuthuzelo Eugenia Dingiswayo. Striking about the old woman is her sharp mind.

Because of the barrenness of the homelands, and the lack of land and work, he left for Johannesburg in the early forties to seek work. He got a job at CNA. As soon as he assumed his duties, he noticed the poor working conditions and lack of job security. He, together with other workers, established a committee to organise a trade union. The union was formed at CNA. The bosses quickly realised the potential of this venture and decided to sabotage it. As is characteristic of capitalists, the targets were the leaders and those vocal in demanding better working conditions. He and a fellow-worker, Masango, were sacked. He found himself jobless — and city life without a job is unbearable. More so, he found it difficult to get another job and resorted to small business, opening a shop at Moroka shanties.

He joined the ANC in 1944, at a time of heightened militancy among the youth and galvanising the ANC. In 1946 he joined the Communist Party of South Africa. He went to the Johannesburg City Hall every Sunday evening

to listen to speeches by Party officials and activists. He met Dan Tloome in Johannesburg as an official of the Party and was impressed by his deep understanding of working class problems. He was greatly impressed and motivated by the speeches of Ruth First and Hilda Watts, whom he referred to as "brilliant young ladies". He refers to this period as the beginning of his "broadness in political approach".

As Party members they discussed the history of the Party, its role in the national democratic revolution, trade unionism and the burning issues of the times, and a book on trade unionism by Bill Andrews. He said the strength of the Party was the question of it not only accepting those with high education or good english, or who had been to Fort Hare University. The rule was that those who could not read and write must be taught how to do so. Out of these classes emerged sterling leaders of our people and working class. He said his group was led by Issy Heyman.

He then mentions the promulgation of the Suppression of Communism Act. It was clear from the outset that the target was not only the Party, but the entire democratic formation. Before the Bill became law the Party organised a mass meeting at Newtown on the Witwatersrand — the beginning of highlighting the demands of a new South Africa. Later the M-plan came into being, introducing an underground and semi-underground approach. By this time the despotism of apartheid was unveiled and the role of the Alliance became crucial. The Party accumulated a lot of experience in the underground.

During this period he was successful in organising peasants about their rights and about the ANC. Peasant committees were formed and met secretly at night. He was in one of these committees at Qumru. The ability to organise the peasants popularised the Congress. It was not a question of shouting slogans, but attending to relevant issues like stock-limitation, land and effects of trust. At first they were not openly organising as the ANC, but calling it a committee. This however opened a gateway to opportunities of the Unity Movement, so they decided openly to make the committees Congress.

People who used to attend the evening meetings were stalwarts like Govan Mbeki and Mhlaba. They became very popular with the peasants.

Tat'uNtwana led a delegation of Transkei peasants to the last ANC conference in Durban. By then the ferment in the Bantustans had reached unprecedented heights. They heard of events earlier on in Zeerust and Sekhukhuneland. In the Transkei the peasants were up in arms against "Maziphathe". King Sabata was very powerful and influential in this mass rejection of Matanzima's sell-out deal.

The organisation became so powerful that he recalls one grafitti at Umtata railway station which read: "Beware of Communism". Instead of this being detrimental to the image of the ANC and Party, it rather raised the people's curiosity and thirst for knowledge. This made organising a bit easier. People reasoned that if the enemy feared Communism, there must be something good in it.

In 1960 he was served with Proclamation R400 and served with a deportation order by Matanzima. He was briefly detained during the State of Emergency. On release he went into hiding in Queenstown. He decided to leave the country and went to Lesotho. The wife and children followed. In Lesotho they formed a refugee committee of which he was the treasurer. He was with Gilbert Hani, Mpemba and Seperepere. The committee was composed of others from the PAC, Unity Movement and Soya and was to look after refugees.

In 1965 he left Lesotho for Botswana with the whole family — wife and seven children. They stayed in a refugee centre and later decided to open a business. He soon became a part of the community and was involved in the church, school committees and other projects. His wife was a teacher, but has now retired.

He looks at me through thick-lensed glasses, and says that it is now up to the young to complete the task. The light is no longer at the end of the tunnel, but somewhere IN the tunnel. He stresses discipline and the ability to communicate with the people as important qualities for a revolutionary. He also stresses that it is of the utmost importance that every member of the movement, whatever his role, must do something for the movement. He adds that we must fight tenaciously against those who want hand-outs and who see the ANC as a vehicle through which they can enrich themselves. He concludes by saying that the job now is to muster all forces for the final onslaught.

His last words in our talk were: "The discussion we had today has really taken me back to the roaring fifties and made me younger."



STORY OF A BLACK WOMAN'S STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

STRIKES HAVE FOLLOWED ME ALL MY LIFE

A South African Autobiography,

by Emma Mashinini

(The Women's Press, 1989; 142pp. Price £6.95)

Strikes have followed me all my life reminds one of a similarly unassuming book, *Let me Speak*, by Domitilla, a simple and straightforward story of the problems faced by Bolivian miners.

Our literature has always pretended (to the extent of being insulting) that there is no audible voice that represents significant statements by black women. The significance of Emma Mashinini's book is that her story is about struggle, contribution and sacrifice made by women, especially black women, in our stride to freedom. And it is told in the voice of a black woman. *Strikes have followed me all my life* does not assume anything. It is a book about the life experience of a black woman who is menaced as women are all over the world. Emma

challenges our tea-parties and genteel mannerisms when she says that:

“There was no time to sit and laugh and talk. No time and no energy. Even going to church, trying to cope with getting them (the children) to wash, finding their socks, always shouting. Only on the way there, walking out of that house and holding their hands — I think that was the only living time I had with my children. Just holding their hands and walking with them to church.”

This reflects the will on the part of black women to protect and nurture our children in an unjust world. One cannot help admiring her courage when we see, from the first pages, how she tries to deal with the pain of the forced uprooting of communities in pursuance of the racist policies of apartheid. We see the difficulties facing working women, the double work load in the home and at the factory. Women will immediately recognise themselves when they read:

“When I got home I would start making a fire... I would start chopping the wood, getting the coal, getting the ashes out... And there would be no-one to follow my children when they were getting up and the basin would be full of dirty water, and I would start emptying that as well, picking up the dirty clothes and the school clothes... before I started cooking... My husband would not be rushing to come home. What would he rush to come for?”

This routine is known to most working women the world over. They are the ones who have to carry the burden of the double working day. Here is a woman who is also an activist, a union organiser just as her partner/husband, but is expected by society to take care of the home single-handed. This is one of the major problems facing working women today and requires the attention of our Movement and the democratic organisations. The attitude to women must be changed.

Mashinini touches on so much in her autobiography, but the core of her work remains her work as a union organiser. We follow her beginnings as a shop steward in union work; we see through her encounters with racial discrimination and Job Reservation the formation of the Commercial, Catering & Allied Workers' Union of South Africa, CCAWUSA. Emma was General Secretary and this was one of the largest affiliates of COSATU (Congress of SA Trade Unions), with a membership predominantly made up of women. Emma Mashinini also talks about her detention, and the traumatic results this had on her.

This is a story of contradictions: "... I was called in to Mr Herman, the top man in the factory, who told me he had information that a strike was going to take place within a week... I thought he was lying because I had no idea there was going to be any strike..." It is exactly this lack of being on top of issues which undermines Emma Mashinini's contribution. One wonders whether she really thought it out when she told the boss that he'd be proven wrong because no strike would take place. And when it happened, she writes: "...Unfortunately and to my great disappointment, the workers did go out on strike that week."

In spite of this discord, there is no denying that this book needed to be written and needs to be read by all of us. It demonstrates the need for women to write about their lives, experiences, hopes and aspirations. Let us speak...
I.M.

SOUTH AFRICA'S RECORD IN NAMIBIA

The Devils Are Among Us: The War for Namibia

by Denis Herbstein and John Evenson
(Zed Books, London, 1989. Price £7.95)

The regime in South Africa has always buttressed itself with lies and disinformation. It has lied consistently about its oppression of the South African people, and about its attempts to destabilise the Front Line States. It blacked out information about Namibia during the long years it occupied and exploited that country, and what the outside world heard was, for the most part, only silence. Herbstein and Evenson call it "the silence of the unheard scream."

A breakthrough came in 1984, when a number of churches set up the Namibia Communications Centre in London, publishing reports from clergy on the ground in Namibia. *The Namibian*, the first Windhoek newspaper to support the freedom struggle and report on the progress of the war, came out in 1985. It was persecuted from the beginning by bannings, detentions and a bombing. There remained a dearth of foreign correspondents in Namibia, and in the chapter *Empty Notebook, Silent Camera*, Herbstein and Evenson

give details of the restrictions Pretoria imposed on reporting.

Herbstein and Evenson are journalists. They explain in a preface that they were blacklisted by Pretoria, and so prevented from entering Namibia. In writing their book, they were forced to do what they call an "outside job," using evidence from the Communications Centre and testimony from their own interviews with travellers and exiles.

The job has been well done, and the book has been thoughtfully put together. It is the first summing-up of what we knew about the war, together with a great body of concrete detail that is new to most of us, and a good deal of information about the efforts Pretoria made to hide its crimes. The first chapters give a brief review of the history of the occupation and the events leading up to the beginning of the armed struggle for freedom. The main body of the book deals with the war itself, and here the information (particularly that relating to the activities of the SADF and Koevoet) seems to have been meticulously gathered. There are maps, a good index, a bibliography and a glossary.

Pretoria no longer has control over Namibian information, but, as this book reminds us, there are other forces at work to prevent Namibian news reaching the outside world. Sections of the western press have collaborated with these forces. Before the elections in 1989, when the United Nations went to Namibia and overseas papers sent in their correspondents, western editors virtually ignored the excellent press statements about Pretoria's rearguard repression that SWAPO and the Communications Centre were sending almost daily to all news desks. The last sections of the book, *Namibia Inc.* and *The Deceitful Decade*, are a very interesting discussion of the nature of the support Pretoria gets from the outside world. The writers sum up by saying:

".... South Africa's hearts and minds war is fought abroad as well. Its foot-soldiers are everywhere. They are not just government employees, but public relations firms, parliamentarians, students, well-intentioned ideologues, the occasional cleric, 'reds-under-the-beds' hunters, some well paid, others genuine amateurs. Their opinions range from those who believe South Africa's presence is best for Namibia (and for their business activities) to those who fear a 'communist SWAPO' take-over."

We should keep in mind that the time may come in the progress of our South African revolution when the western press deals with us in the way it has dealt with Namibia.

Joanna



ON THE EMANCIPATION OF **WOMEN**

from Quincy

Dear Editor,

The article 'Feminism and the Struggle for National Liberation' by Clara in *The African Communist* (3rd Quarter 1989, pp.38-43) is certainly an interesting contribution to the question of women's emancipation. However, in trying to avoid the interpretation that women's oppression is caused by the male domination of society, and showing that women's emancipation lies in the development of a classless society, she falls into the trap of thinking that women's freedom must wait until that classless society is built.

Clara uses textbook Marxism-Leninism to show that the struggle is not against men, but against class, yet is unable to develop it in a meaningful way to deal with the oppression felt by women today. Hence, she is unable to see that the process of women's emancipation has already begun.

Clara states (p.40):

'It should be clear that the *total* emancipation of women is only realisable under a developed socialist economy, *and only if*, in each stage of our revolution, we organise women to participate fully and raise their demands as part of the people's demands.' (My emphasis)

This is correct, but unfortunately, not developed to indicate that the process of women's emancipation has already begun, and that during this process the lot of women must be, and is being, improved towards their total emancipation.

Even though today the material conditions are developing (the degree varies in different parts of the world) to make possible the emancipation of women, the ideas associated with the oppression of women continue to linger on and must be dealt with ideologically. At the same time, the ideological

battle can only be conducted successfully once the material conditions for women's emancipation begin to develop, signified by women becoming involved in socially productive work.

I remember the situation in one of the bars in a developing African country where a black ANC woman argued passionately with the women in the bar about the goals of women's emancipation only to have them all gang up on her and, with some enthusiasm, defend their subjugation to men. And cases where women feel there is something wrong with their marriage if their husband has not given them a beating.

The ideological struggle cannot be won without the developing material conditions to enable progressive ideas to be put into practice. It is not enough for women to be simply involved in socially productive work, as capital will treat them as second-class members of the working class, intensify the exploitation of labour and place a wedge in the possible unity of the working class as a whole.

The whole trade union movement must fight for equal pay for work of equal value, maternity leave, paternity leave for both parents, etc., to put them on that equal footing. But this is not enough, for that necessary change in consciousness will not arise through struggle alone, just as the political consciousness of the working class cannot arise out of class struggle but must be introduced from without by a Marxist-Leninist party, at the appropriate time, to the workers participating in the struggle.

Just as the Marxist-Leninist party strives to ensure that its members are the best workers, in attitude and activity, in the field of class struggle, so they must prepare their male members, in attitude and activity, on the woman's question. At the same time, the party must prepare their female members to overcome the limitations they genuinely feel due to the male domination of society. Not only do the old ideas encourage male superiority, but they also encourage female inferiority. Together they mitigate against the ability of women to assert themselves in the presence of men.

In the workplace, effective rules and regulations must be fought for to overcome the sexual harassment and prejudices experienced by women. In the labour movement organisations, and the liberation movements, as well as other progressive organisations, programmes must be developed to overcome the stereotypes of men and women that have been inculcated in both men and women. Women must be assisted in asserting themselves and playing their rightful role, thereby strengthening the whole movement for the struggle of the liberation of mankind.

It is not enough to have these enshrined in policy by a unanimous vote at the highest body of the organisation. There needs to be an ongoing discussion

on how to implement that policy, and mechanisms set up that not only ensure that the policy is carried out, but also deal with the problems arising out of the implementation of the policy.

Where an offence occurs, it should be dealt with by the organisation in a manner that encourages the correct interpretation of that policy, irrespective of society's attitude. For example, if a comrade has committed rape, an abhorrent act, which unfortunately has little impact at the moment on men, but has a tremendous impact on women, then the minimum response should be the expulsion of the comrade from the organisation.

It is the Marxist-Leninist party that should lead this ideological offensive and demonstrate it in its activities.

Finally, it is important that this process, if it has not already, should begin now — otherwise the old ideas will put off the total emancipation of women and slow down the building of the 'developed' socialist society.

I have one more thing to deal with and that is the feature of individual sex love. This can only fully mature in a classless society, for it is the ultimate expression of the liberation of mankind. The emotion of real love between man and woman has its highest expression in the material form in the reproduction of human life. Yet this can never be fully realised and developed as long as society functions on the accumulation of private property which necessitates the exploitation of person by person.

A COMMUNIST PERSPECTIVE

from George E. Blue
— An American Political Prisoner

Dear Editor,

With the current events taking place in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union with its non-intervention policies has placed the United States in a position to receive world-wide criticism for its policy of intervention in the Caribbean, Central and South America. Peoples must be allowed to determine their own destiny without interference by the American government. No country has the right to meddle in the internal affair of any other country. The American government has continually interfered in the internal affair of the Americas.

On November 12, 1989, Secretary of Defence Cheney stated "the Soviet Union must stop arming Nicaragua which in turn gave arms to the freedom

fighters of El Salvador who had just attacked the Salvadorean Government." Secretary Cheney doesn't understand the freedom of El Salvador, nor did Secretary Cheney say that American taxpayers are paying one million dollars a day to prop up the Salvadorean Government. Without this aid the people would have overthrown that bankrupt government and would be on their way to establishing a true people's government.

The world's opinion should insist that: (a) The American Government dismantle the Contras as well as any other mercenary army that they own and finance; (b) tear down the illegal blockade of Cuba, quit trying to destabilise that government, and let the Cuban people continue their revolution and the making of their socialist state; (c) allow each country to hold true and free elections without interference financially or otherwise; (d) recognise the government that the people elect and not instigate a coup as was done in Chile whereby the CIA undermined a duly elected government and the President was murdered; and (e) remove all military presence whom the United States call advisors from all countries in the Americas.

Last but not least, return Guantanamo Naval Base to its rightful owner, the Cuban People, and remove all military personnel from Panama and return that land to the people of Panama.

George E. Blue 884036

P.O. Box 41, Michigan City, Indiana 46360, USA.

GREETINGS FROM ABROAD

from A. Shrif, Dere Dawa, Ethiopia

Dear Comrades,

Please accept our comradely greetings and heartfelt thanks for sending us your publications — *The African Communist* and *Umsebenzi*.

It is worthy to say that these materials are highly valuable and greatly contribute to deepen and widen our understanding of Marxism-Leninism, theoretically as well as the practical questions and the building of the party.

Through these materials we follow the process of your people's struggle for national liberation and social progress in South Africa.

Our support and solidarity are fully with you.

WINDS OF CHANGE ARE BLOWING

from A.K. Moses, Bophuthatswana

Dear Editor,

We the people of Africa, particularly of South Africa, are grateful for the events in Namibia after so many years of suffering in the Namibian people's quest for freedom.

The SWAPO victory in the elections came as a shock for the Boers despite their attempts to push the DTA. SWAPO proved itself to be an organisation representing all the people of Namibia.

Namibia is the last colony in Africa to gain independence. South Africa itself is not a colony but a country which needs an immediate transformation from minority to majority rule. The winds of change which have blown independence throughout Africa, including Namibia, will surely blow freedom to our country South Africa.

De Klerk and Pik Botha must seize this opportunity to follow the path of Namibia and bring change to South Africa, the last country under white minority rule.

CORRECTION

from Theresa Zania

Dear Editor,

Please note that in my article on the ICU in *The African Communist* No. 120, First Quarter 1990, there is a printing error. The name Bennett Ncwana has been changed to Bennett Newmans. Could this please be noted in one of the next issues of the AC? Since historians may use such articles, it would be a pity if such an error were not corrected.

ON SOCIALISM AND PSEUDO **SOCIALISM**

from Udey Jobarteh

Dear Editor,

I am a Gambian girl and member of the Gambia Anti-Apartheid Movement as well as secretary-general of its Women's Council, at present studying in Poland. I want to comment on what is happening in Eastern Europe.

It is very important to understand that socialism is a science which deals with the economic, political and social science of a given form of government. As a science it can be studied, mastered and refined by the people of any nation who have given their lives to implementing the science of socialism. In other words socialism is not the property of the Soviet Union, or the East or the West, but the knowledge of that science is the property of the whole of humanity.

All the advanced capitalist societies, the dependent capitalist and the pseudo-socialist societies are gripped with serious economic and political crisis and this is a clear indication of the fact that the whole world is going through a revolution. The fundamental lesson is that pseudo-socialism cannot be reformed but needs to be completely overhauled in order to move on to genuine socialism which can guarantee its sons and daughters an independent and self-reliant economic system geared towards satisfying the material needs and aspirations of the people, rather than market oriented economies which have already proved to be a failure in Eastern Europe.

Furthermore it should be the duty of any genuine socialist government to use the media and other means to educate the masses so that they will be fully aware of the day-to-day running of their governments and so that they are able to be aware of the daily lives of their leaders — for example, by knowing their incomes. This is precisely what the leaders in the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe have never done.

Eastern Europe never produced socialism. It was pseudo-socialism that existed there, the twin brother of capitalism. These so-called socialist states proclaim certain noble principles which do not match their deeds. Moreover, in calling for communism, if we understand the true meaning of communism as the higher level of the development of a socialist society, we mean that society has produced the needs of the people in abundance. Each person

works according to its ability and takes from society according to its needs. In such a society there are no rich or poor because in the process of transformation the exploitation of person by person is eradicated and at this stage it can be said that everyone is equal.

In conclusion I would like to believe that alcoholism, prostitution, drug addiction and laziness are part and parcel of capitalist society.

Yours for freedom

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DOCUMENTS

NICARAGUA – BIG SETBACK THAT LEADS TO NEW STAGE OF STRUGGLE

The following article by Juan Marrero was published in the English language weekly edition of the Cuban newspaper *Granma* on March 11:

THE OUTCOME OF THE Nicaraguan election surprised, above all, its own protagonists. Against all predictions from the most diverse sources and origins, the Sandinista National Liberation Front and its presidential candidate, Comrade Daniel Ortega, failed to obtain at the polls the majority support shown in the surveys and that the mass rallies seemed to indicate. Ortega himself immediately recognised the adverse results of the elections.

It isn't difficult to pinpoint the reasons why many expected the Front to win. These were the revolutionary performance of this organisation, and its heroic and tenacious resistance as the vanguard of the Nicaraguan people over the last ten years waging an unequal battle against U.S. imperialism.

More recently, the crime committed by the Bush administration in Panama and the murder on Nicaraguan soil of four nuns at the hands of the contras armed by the United States made people think that the scales in these elections would tip resolutely towards the Sandinista candidates.

Surprise must give way to reflection. And even while it is still too early to comprehensively analyse the causes that led to this painful setback, it is necessary to make certain things clear right from the start.

The February 25 confrontation was not actually between the Sandinistas and their local detractors. In fact, the choice in the Nicaraguan election was between the Sandinista National Liberation Front with its presidential candidate Daniel Ortega, and the opposite side, U.S. imperialism.

There's no other conclusion that can be arrived at following the briefest of analyses concerning the conditions under which the Sandinistas had to work and implement their revolutionary platform.

The real context in which this process has unfolded is that of a country enduring a merciless dirty war shamelessly sponsored and conducted by the U.S. government through a mercenary army made up of Somocista murderers, traitors, deserters, turncoats and plain criminals. From its bases in bordering countries and on the Nicaraguan frontiers, the mercenary bands terrorised and plundered the Nicaraguan population. Trained by U.S. advisers to avoid open clashes with the Sandinista People's Army, they terrorised towns and cities, ambushed defenceless civilians, murdered peasants and sabotaged the economy. These were the hordes about whom President Reagan boasted as he appointed himself their commanding general and which opened up recruiting offices in the United States itself.

Thus the U.S. government established the unusual precedent in contemporary international relations of financing and waging a cruel and sustained war against a country with which it maintained diplomatic relations and in whose capital it had an embassy, which functioned as a veritable centre for subversion in support of the forces that since the very beginning operated against the Sandinista Revolution.

The Sandinistas also resisted against ten years of economic aggression. In addition to the over 60,000 victims of the dirty war, there were the huge economic cost and the damages caused to the population by the heavy blockade and the severe sanctions that ruined the country's economy, together with the actions of the contras in the countryside, ruining the agricultural production on which the Nicaraguan economy is based.

Also to be considered are the consequences of the compulsive processes and the historical retreats that have given rise to chaos and political and economic uncertainty in the Eastern European countries that had shown consistent solidarity with the Sandinistas.

The Sandinistas' effort for development and social justice were thus conditioned by the terrible economic crisis, the big losses caused by a decade of struggle against subversion and counter-revolution and the difficult international situation. The effects of all this in certain sectors of the country's population, with unequal levels of ideological development, are evident. The economic adjustment measures adopted by the Sandinista Front, in line with International Monetary Fund recommendations gave the most affected and poorest sector of the population reason to feel discontented, as has happened wherever those measures are implemented. The political alliance that opposed the Sandinistas in the elections was an all-out effort to take advantage of this situation: a wide array of parties of all shapes and sizes — ranging from outspoken capitalists all the way to self-proclaimed socialist and even communist elements — aligned itself with the UNO opposition coalition, which thrived among the popular classes using demagoguery and populism.

Thus, there were two clear-cut platforms confronting each other: the model advocated by the Sandinistas of national independence, pluralism, mixed economy and an international policy admittedly similar to that of the Social Democrats; and the model championed by a spurious alliance of opposition parties, calling for a return to capitalism, denationalisation and privatisation of the state-owned sector, plus an overt and deliberate dependence, in the economic and political fields, on the United States.

The FSLN honoured its honest and firm commitment to hold a clean electoral process, overseen by thousands of observers. It is now recognised as the most closely watched electoral process in history.

Meanwhile, the United States reserved for itself until the last moment the role of judge — ignoring, incidentally, the authority of the representatives of the OAS, the UN and former President Carter, who acted as observers — and announced that in the event of a victory by Daniel Ortega, there would begin an enigmatic test period at the end of which it would consider whether the FSLN government was worthy of approval. That is, the United States made very clear that Daniel Ortega's triumph would be tantamount to prolonging the dirty war, the blockade and the economic asphyxiation.

Nicaraguan voters were confronted by the prospects of a Sandinista triumph which would not put an end to the war, the blockade or the sanctions.

In contrast, the formula of the opposition alliance, supported by imperialism, enjoyed the shameful privilege of representing the interests and the will of the aggressor which made it possible to promise the normalisation in relations with the United States which would — and did — immediately recognise the alliance victory.

This was how, after a campaign occasionally reminiscent of the advertising battles fought every four years in the United States, the February 25 elections finally took place.

The outcome is there for all to see. Today it can be seen that the hypothesis of alleviating the economic crisis and ending the war, which depended only on U.S. actions, became an expectation which tipped the balance in favour of the imperialist spearhead. President Bush lost no time in announcing his decision to end the war and the U.S. Congress advocated the virtual disappearance of the mercenary army and the start of an economic assistance programme to help the new administration.

Such is the origin of the majority consensus which doesn't necessarily represent a vote against the performance of the FSLN, the revolutionary vanguard which led the struggle that defeated Somoza, resisted a decade of imperialist aggression and conducted the cleanest electoral process in the history of Nicaragua.

It is up to the Sandinista leaders to draw their own conclusions now.

However hard this setback is for all the progressive forces of the planet, one truth permeates the bitterness of this severe test. The over 400,000 Nicaraguans who supported the Sandinistas and President Daniel Ortega voted in favour of sovereignty and the Revolution, in spite of all the pressures, threats and dangers. They constitute the most genuine exponent of the history of the Nicaraguan people, the protagonist of the glorious effort of the last ten years. The vote which favoured the amorphous conglomeration of 14 parties, temporarily united in order to get a piece of the pie backed by the imperialists, can't compare, qualitatively, to the vote for the FSLN, embodying the political lucidity and the patriotic dignity of Sandino.

It was, no question about it, a big setback but not political bankruptcy. The Nicaraguan Revolution has just gone through a difficult test and is now embarking on a new stage of struggle.

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